THE WHITE FLAME of FRANCE

MAUDE RADFORD WARREN

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THE WHITE FLAME OF FRANCE

SISTER JULIE

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"We met the heroine of Gerbévillers, Sister Julie. We sat in her little house with its dim old furniture and ancient pictures, and listened to her tale of what she had seen and done, and looked at the Cross of the Legion of Honor which President Poincaré himself pinned on her habit."

See page 146

THE WHITE FLAME OF FRANCE

BY

MAUDE RADFORD WARREN

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"PETER PETER," "BARBARA'S MARRIAGES," ETC., ETC.

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TO

LORD NORTHCLIFFE

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CHAPTER I

A Road in France

A FRENCH soldier named this book, a little Zouave whom I met on a lonely road in the war zone. He made me feel as I never had before, the fire and glory in that watchword of the French people: "*Vive la France!*" Something had gone wrong with the military car in which I had been taken to a certain hospital, very near the trenches. The chauffeur accepted this difficulty in the uncomplaining way in which the French now accept all ills, trivial or tragic. While he tinkered, a hunched, patient figure in horizon blue, I wandered up and down the roadside.

Ah, the roads of France, — how poignant is the change in them! What a freight of gay life they carried, such a short time since! Four years ago most of the inhabitants of France could have boasted of the happiness of having no story. Now not a man, woman or child but represents a drama; scarcely a face but shelters a tragedy. It is a bitter thing that a people so simply happy as the French, so ready to ripple into joy, into

responsiveness, should have to bear not only the daily shock, but the long grinding pressure of this war. How many of them have lost the very earth they once knew, towns, villages, forests, like those fabled cities of old that crumbled into the black waters about Land's End. Civilians come creeping back to a heap of ruins that was once a fair plain full of homes, and they cannot tell on what spot were the houses that were the background to their happy living. The priest cannot find the site of his church. The farmer looks on a loathsome sea of tumbled earth-waves, incapable of full tillage for a long time to come, and he asks,

"Is that the land that once bore my harvests?"

But the roads of France, — how we tourists loved to peer out of the windows to look at them as the train swept by! How we loved to unroll them under the swift wheels of a motor-car! Green-bordered and neat, flashing with charm or whimsicality, or serene in suggestions of peace and plenty, — oh, never was there anything more symbolic of the joy of common, simple living than those roads of France!

And even now, changed as they are, they are not sad. Never that! The people of France have taken their tragedy as a hero takes his wounds, as a saint takes his martyrdom, as a mother takes the daily exaction of service she is glad to give for love's sake. Seeing their high spirit, we who were once tourists of France, and are now her eternal lovers, can but walk over the

roads with the same resolution the French people show.

Not sad, then, the roads; but no longer symbolic of a gay, peace-loving people. As I wandered along that Aisne road, looking at some abandoned trenches, now already green again and harmless as ditches, I tried to forget the war or at least to believe that some day all the wounds of France will be healed, like those raw gashes of earth where, such a short time since, good men died and " climbed quickly to God."

But the road would not let me forget the war. Along it came, first of all some wagons bearing materials for repairing the trenches, — stakes and trench-mats, and logs. Then came two or three " kitchens," their square tops shining, smoke coming from their stove-pipes. They look competent and fussy, reminding one somehow of a capable, energetic housewife who cannot give service without a strong flavor of egotism. After an interval came a group of civilians in black. They looked curiously at the stranger, bowing, gravely smiling. There is not much laughter now in France.

More wagons, this time loaded with ammunition. Following came a big gun, drawn by eight mules, and covered with cunning splashes of brown and green *camouflage*. The driver was looking upward, and I followed his gaze to see, high in the air, a German Taube. Sinister, ominous, it soared and spied, a dreadful bird. And then swinging up the road with crisp, marching

feet came two companies of men in horizon-blue. I forgot the menace of the Taube, for they were marching up to the first-line trenches.

Who of us has not at some time stood in a crowded railway station, or on some great street through which pours the epic of a nation, and been struck with certain wonder that all these people should be nothing to him, nor he to them, that these people know sorrow and love, suffering and remorse and peace and hope, like himself, but they are eternally strangers to him, are already flowing away from him forever.

But whosoever has such a feeling to-day, as he sees a company of soldiers march by, touches not sentiment but tragedy, touches, too, the sublimity of courage and self-sacrifice. We smile at the soldier; we say "*au 'voir*," but in our hearts we say good-bye, and we know that if he comes back it will be as a gift. Of those men in horizon-blue, some were walking their last along this fair road. Boys, who had never yet made a real choice, a real decision, never known the shy, wondering happiness of a girl's love, were looking their last on the green and gold of the world, their lives never to be fully unrolled on this side of that last outpost beyond which no sentry can stay any of us.

Those men in horizon-blue contrasted sharply with the men in khaki whom I had seen in England a short time before, Colonials, as it happened, tall, broad, pink-cheeked, their clothes of good cloth, well cut; they had looked as if on

parade. The uniforms of the French soldiers were made of shoddy cloth, badly cut, badly sewn, quick to stain and fade and soak in moisture. Their faces were sallow, unshaven; in repose they were even haunted, old. Men who are twenty-eight look forty, and men who are forty seem sixty. They bear an invisible burden, such as the English and we Americans need not bear. Men in khaki know that no matter what happens to them, their land is safe; but the Frenchmen know that France is deeply wounded, for generations to come.

On they marched, smiling and waving as I called "*Bon chance!*" to them, calling back to me, "*Merci, Madame,*" and "*Vive l'Amérique!*" The horizon-blue of their uniforms spread over the road, splendid waves which the enemy would breast in vain. Before the war, certain countries suggested colors to me: green for Ireland, and golden for Italy; crude red for Turkey, and royal purple for Palestine. If I had thought of France in such terms, it would have been as opalescent, a color shimmering and variable. But now, forever, it will be horizon-blue, noble, beautiful, the symbol for deathless courage, for endurance, for patience, for dignity, for a stern, high spirituality.

They had gone; the road was still and lonely, for the sounds of the cheering had died down, and I was seeing only the brave, strained faces from which all the youth had been seared away. Presently, behind me, I heard a sound of whistling,

gay, boyish. It was a strain of "*Marlbrough s'en va-t-en guerre.*" I turned. There swinging down a path was a little Zouave soldier. His crimson cap and red-embroidered coat made a vivid note against the green background, contrasted almost violently with the horizon-blue of which my mind and soul were full. On he came, happy, spontaneous, making me think of a scarlet tanager, of a cardinal bird, of a figure in a Christmas pantomime, of many gay and happy things, none of them associated with war. He felt my welcome and my invitation, for he sat down on the bank with me and we became friends.

People in the war zone very quickly make short cuts to friendship in these swift days. They shear away conventions, put aside reticences, climb over the barriers that the world erects for social protection. In this world of war, the soul may walk uncovered, for only what is real counts now. So this little Zouave soldier and I talked freely.

"You are happy?" I said.

"Oh, but yes," he returned; "I am on my *permission.* The cottage where my mother lives is across the fields, half a mile. But she did not expect me, no; she is gone to my aunt's for the day. So I am going after her. First she will weep with joy to see me; then she will laugh; then she will weep again because of losing an hour or two of my *permission.*"

"Oh, but don't stay here, then," I said, "much as I want to talk to you —"

He unslung a loaf of bread from his pack.

"Oh, but I must eat," he said, with that reverence for the digestive processes which all France shows; "but yes, my mother will understand that. So, if madame permits, I will eat."

Madame permitted, and asked,

"Then this is your home? You were born here?"

He found his bottle of wine, before he replied, with a sly laugh,

"Ah, no; my mother happened to be visiting here when the Germans made war. Madame would never guess where I was born. In that part of Alsace which the Germans hold! But yes! And I was mobilized in the German army. Ah, yes, I and many other young men, loyal to France.

"See, then, madame, we were born of parents who had once known French citizenship. We spoke the language in our homes. And on the streets, when we played our games, we spoke French; if a gendarme came up, we spoke German. We used to talk of what we would do if a war broke out. For we knew that Germany was only waiting to eat up more of our France.

"Well, then, madame, we were mobilized. I was just seventeen, no more. Men of forty-five were taken, too. The Germans wanted to spend all the blood of the Alsatians, first, and save their own men. That is like them. They do not think we are citizens; we are conquered subjects. But no one protested. It would have done no good,

and, besides, we knew what we were going to do, we Alsatians! So they took us, and put us in the German lines, and we waited our opportunity. The shells came over and killed some of us — French shells. Then one night our chance came.

"Eighty of us, that night, crawled on our hands and knees through the German lines. Do you realize what that means, madame, — the first discovery, and all of us would have been dead men! What if a pistol dropped! What if even a heel clicked sharply on a pebble! Such straining muscles, such an anguish of listening, such fear lest we cough or sneeze! We took the German patrol prisoners. Me, I was glad not to kill them; they were men we had eaten with. We tied up their mouths and took away their weapons and made them crawl before us.

"It was I, madame, — I, who had the honor of hailing the French patrol, of telling them who we were, of fixing their faith in us. It was I, little Jean-Baptiste, who stood at the head of the eighty in headquarters and answered the questions of the officers. It was I who could tell them exactly how many kilometres from the front line lay the storehouse of ammunition, for I had gauged that. They took us to Paris; you will understand, madame, that they had to be careful, for some Alsatians are not loyal to France. Spies are everywhere.

"But if madame were to look up my record now she would not find me registered in the army

as Jean Baptiste thus-and-so from German Alsace. Ah, no; for if that were so, and I were ever taken prisoner by the Germans, I should be shot as a traitor. For, do you see, madame, we are changed from sector to sector. Some day some of us may be holding the trenches in French Alsace, and may be taken prisoner in a raid. The French government gave me a new surname, and registered me as from Paris. That has been done for all of the eighty. Me, as you see, they put in a Zouave regiment. When our Alsace all belongs to us again, we shall take back our own names. I shall lead my mother to our little house, and I shall say,

"'Here, Mama, here is your French home that your Jean-Baptiste gave his blood for.'"

"May the day come soon," I said. "Do you know, Jean-Baptiste, as you came along the path, I had just been looking at the men in blue, and you seemed like a bit of living fire."

Jean-Baptiste sprang to his feet.

"I am fire," he cried, "I, and others like me. I am the fire of France! So are the men in blue; there are blue flames, madame, and yellow. The men from Morocco and Tunis, they are yellow fire. And we are all burning for France, madame! *Vive la France!* Anyone who loves her is for her a tongue of flame. *Vive, vive la France!*"

I had heard that slogan before, thrilled to it, but never as now. That little ugly soldier in red, with his unshaven face alight, his dark eyes

gleaming, was for me a torch, was France. The colors, blue, red, yellow, fused for me into the white flame of France.

And I knew that she would live! — that behind that prayer, that vow, lies a blazing spirit of pure devotion. That little soldier's pulsing cry, "*Vive la France!*" gave me courage, taught me that for all that France is martyred, for all that her veins are bleeding, she can never be a forlorn country. Never, because in every true heart in France, in every home, simple or stately, there burns a white flame dedicated to France. The country is one great altar dedicated to patriotism. The fire will burn forever, because it is the spirit of France. France shall live, indeed!

CHAPTER II

The Gateway to France

My little Zouave friend, Jean-Baptiste, was the first and only person in France to ask me why I had come.

I said, truly enough, "To see, and to write, and, where I can, to help."

Yet, saying that, I knew a sense of shame, a feeling that I had no right to be in France, unless I could be sure of bringing to France many, many times what I should cost her in food and transportation. To his question as to how I had come I could have replied,

"I got on a ship in New York, and landed in England, and then I went to Havre, and to Paris, and after that to the war zone."

But that would not have explained at all. If at that point Jean-Baptiste had not finished his bread and wine, and if I had not remembered his waiting mother, perhaps we should have talked, and I should have told him of the home in the Marne country that kept calling me from the moment war was declared. But Jean-Baptiste's meal was over, and the patient chauffeur crawled resignedly from under the gray military motor to say that at last madame could proceed.

So we left Jean-Baptiste, a scarlet flame, swing-

ing down the road to the woman who loved him, and who would receive him as one born again. And as we drove farther and farther away from the sound of bombardment, I thought of that home in the Marne region that had taken me back to France, just as definitely as did the good ship *Finland*.

I had no strong emotional association with that home, — a cool stone farmhouse, standing on a hillside. I liked the Marne country, because it supplied the ideal combination of beautiful landscape with prosperous homes. Village after village with big churches and little houses, quaint courtyards, stone fountains, and cheerful, interested people whose friendly smiles made of one an honored guest. Before the door of this farmhouse were two green poplars that made me think of green fire, so rich they were in beauty and force and fervor. But mainly I was pleased because the house contained so many happy people: madame, the practical and confident; her husband, the least degree henpecked; four big sons, very obedient to their competent mother; one little son, conspiring for disobedience with his indulgent father; one big daughter, so beautiful it caught one's breath, and as docile and sweet as she was beautiful; one little daughter, piquant and fiery and spoiled. Rosy-cheeked, healthy people they were, who shrieked a protest when I opened my windows of a cold night, and who considered more than one bath a week an affectation. I have

sat with them in their dining-room, which gave a good view of the sloping fields in which they all worked, and have listened to madame gaily boasting of the dowries she would be able to give her daughters and of the fine matches she contemplated for her sons. Each year her ambitions grew, and various girls, once considered very desirable, were mentally rejected as not good enough. I have seen that family in their friendly intercourse with their neighbors. I have heard them at their prayers, when the beads of their rosaries slipped through their fingers, soft as whispers, and their murmuring voices mingled with the winds outside my windows.

I wanted to know that they were safe, because they stood to me as a sort of symbol of the simple, common living of all France; because, if they were safe, I could believe that some day peace and content would come back to France. When the Germans began to roll over France in a gray, noisome flood of force and theft, burning and rapine, I could see it, because I knew the look of the land as one knows a beloved face and because I could see the Lecontier family, running away, as if they were the thieves, or else standing to face who knows what. And the picture seemed unbelievable; no written account, however vivid, could make me really certain that the most brutal war of all the ages had come, that we, safe on our side of the Atlantic, were not merely stifling in a dread nightmare.

Once aboard the *Finland,* the civilian atmosphere of America quite disappeared and we had entered the first stretch of the vista that led to war. There was another writer, with England as his objective, not France. There were two young men, going over to drive ambulances. There was a Belgian officer, crossing by way of England to his company. There were Englishmen returning home to enlist; others back from missions and errands of sorts, all intending to help in the cause of the Allies. There were the mothers and wives and daughters of Canadian officers, eager to keep as close as they could to the men they loved.

From the first, this sea voyage was like no other any of us had ever taken. We had broken off abruptly from America, where scarcely anyone actually realized the war, and, journeying between sea and sky, our minds were being swept bare, as it were, ready for the impressions of life determined by war, and war only. It was chiefly of the war that we talked. As the days passed there were a few of us who spoke of our concerns in America as if they did not belong to us any more; some day they might be reassumed after strange adventuring. Meantime, since lives cannot be suspended, we built up a background of shipboard living. The passengers showed each other their particular types of life-saving waist-coats, capable of being puffed out with buoying air, and with neat pockets for flasks of brandy.

In the staterooms our life-belts were placed where we could easily get them, and stewards hovered about to show us how to put them on, and to relate to us stories of how they had seen this or that Norwegian or Dutch vessel submarined off the coast of Ireland. On deck every day there was fire-drill and boat-drill among the crew, and whoever feared the menace of floating mines might have feared the frailty of some of those sailors, — sallow and dissipated and consumptive most of them looked. Doubtless, the best of their kind had already enlisted. I was sure we should not meet misadventure; nevertheless, I was glad that the lifeboat to which I had been assigned was to be manned by the strongest and soberest looking of the sailors. I selected, as my bit of precious human salvage, a little girl who weighed about the same as my elder godson Martin. If I could lift Martin in and out of a bathtub, and carry him on my back up and down stairs, I was sure I could climb down a long slippery ladder into a lifeboat with that blue-eyed Canadian child about my neck.

And all the time, as we ploughed our blue way towards England, it was not that land I was seeing, but France, opalescent and lovely, the Marne valley with its red-roofed villages, huddling cosily at the feet of the hills, and its long strips of sloping fields, — France, the Marne valley, and the little home of the Lecontiers, perhaps safe, with madame waiting at the doorway to welcome me,

pretending to remember me, whether she did or not; and perhaps not safe, only a wreck of stones and splintered trees. It was that which I saw, rather than the little Canadian children racing up and down the decks, or the Belgian officer, conducting a concentrated flirtation with the prettiest woman on board, or the inscrutable grass widow, pretending to be interested in the English lawyer who was so slow and dull, so dreadfully the-year-before-last in all his processes, that we marvelled at the lady's fortitude.

When we got into the mine and submarine zone a certain increased tensity of feeling was obvious. People laughed a little more than usual, or talked a degree more jerkily, or flitted restlessly from topic to topic. The lifeboats were swung out over the sides of the ship, and we took to staring at them as if we had never seen them before. The ship was more than ever brightly illuminated, especially the incandescent flag picked out on both sides, for this was in the days before we were in the war, before the most ruthless submarining had begun, and when American passenger ships courted publicity, advertised their nationality. Nervous passengers wore their life-belts all night, and the mother of my little Canadian protégé decided that, in case of a submarine, she would prefer to have a man save her child rather than me. The officers became more indefinite in their replies to questions, and the stewards had an uncomfortable way of offering assurance of safety

as if they did not wholly believe what they said, but did wholly relish the situation.

Two melting summer nights, star-sown; two mellow days, with passengers dressed in unduly warm clothes, gazing over the sea in search of periscopes and those barrel-marked, death-dealing mines. Then the first land, changing from gray to pink. It made us forget possible danger, reminded us that our eyes were sea weary. We gazed at it hungrily, feasting on lighthouses and farms, until presently it all grew familiar, and we went below to finish our final packing. Green slopes and towns; the harbor outside of Liverpool, the slow entrance, when we passed a battleship, destroyer and merchant vessels, painted black. Then the dock, where we saw our first men in khaki, and some men in bright blue, who were convalescent soldiers. How quietly they stood on the dock, and yet what dread action they had seen! What sights and feelings they knew that they could never tell us, and never make us understand if they did tell us. A strange dock, this, changed from its civilian coloring by the uniforms.

Below, then, to be quizzed by the alien-inspectors. Two long tables, and officers with weapons and stern faces. I was well supplied with letters, and, though an American citizen, I was British born, and still I had a guilty feeling as if maybe I had come over to embarrass England and France. Echoes floated out to us of stiff exami-

nations and the inscrutable grass widow forgot her reticence and expressed herself in no uncertain terms about the absurdity of such grilling. The English faces remained unmoved, — but I should have liked to warn her!

My turn; my passport scrutinized, my "to whom it may concern" letters read. Then question upon question, in which it was easy to read the fact that spies had been taken in England who had apparently come over to write articles in favor of the Allies. How long did I wish to stay? And why had I come? And what was I going to write? I told them my father had been a Canadian officer, and that I had Irish cousins leading companies at Gallipoli and on the Somme. That caused a little softening. More softening when I showed some letters from my Irish relatives, bemoaning the Sinn Fein rebellion, and most of all when, by chance, there slipped from a flap of my hand-bag a crumpled bit of paper. It was a statement to the effect that the *Saturday Evening Post* was enclosing a substantial check for a story entitled, "You Can Always Bluff 'Em." The size of that check should have convinced them that some editors thought I was fit to write alone. But no; it was the chance the title gave the chief officer to make a joke.

"If you 're not all right," he said, "you can't bluff us. Haw, haw, haw!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" said I gaily, for I knew that joke had passed me.

I am afraid that officer thought, by my appreciation of his words, that he had made a great impression upon me. And indeed he had! He was so much funnier than he dreamed!

Passed I was, and with the conviction that when we Americans got into the war we should do well to take example by the British thoroughness in guarding against spies. The other correspondent joined me, his dark eyes smiling; he had been thoroughly grilled, he said, but he had told them he did n't expect, through his writings, to put a dent in the British empire. We said good-bye, then, to the *Finland,* and wished good luck to the officers and stewards. Ashore, next, before the customs officers. My man was Irish.

"You 've no cigars or cigarettes ma'am, of course?" he said.

"Just a few for the soldiers," I murmured.

He looked at me stonily, and then winked.

"I did n't hear what you said, ma'am. You have no cigars or cigarettes?"

"There might be a broken handful," I replied.

"Nothing dutiable," he said, smearing grimy white chalk on the cleanest portion of my trunk, "but the next time you cross, ma'am, let someone else do your packing, if you have n't the conscience to stretch the truth, like, for the sake of the soldier boys smoking this London trash they sell you."

The hotel then, and dinner, the late comers from the ship reporting that the grass widow had

not been allowed to land, and would have to go back, three days hence, on the *Finland,* to America. We expressed our opinion of the English lawyer who had not tried to help her. Then a group of us set out for the police station to show our passports and register. We felt our way along pitch-black streets, moving slowly among groups of soldiers and civilians. So often a soldier walked with a girl, their arms entwined; they were snatching their happiness under the ribs of death, and what puritan would have been harsh enough to wish they had had more regard for convention? At the police station the inspector roundly scolded us because we had not come sooner.

That night I dreamed not of England and of the dusky gold of the men in khaki, but of the valley of the Marne, and of soldiers in horizon-blue, marching past the farmhouse where the Lecontiers lived, — if, indeed, they still lived! And all next morning, when we journeyed down to London, I kept seeing not the walls of Chester, or green English fields, or little rows of factory houses, or rich rear gardens of little village homes; but I saw France. England was brave, superb, — but France was calling me.

No land has a monopoly of bravery. The Germans are brave, who go out with their officers sheltering behind them, and die for love of their fatherland — fed on lies and hatred. No country can be braver than England. Her sailors sweep

the seas; her women and old men do the bulk of the civilian labor; and the men in khaki "carry on" at the front; so many of them sedentary men who used to be in offices and behind counters, whose greatest and only adventure in life was to make ends meet from week to week; whose chief triumph was to beat the next-door neighbor at flower raising. The men who work and live and die together at the front, gentles and simples, prove to us of what great stuff poor little man is made.

Day by day, as I waited to get to France, I saw how magnificently England bore the war. Twice while I was there I saw it come close in the shape of Zeppelin raids, and I heard no word of fear. The first time I saw a Zeppelin pass over London I think I discovered a spy. I was in Bloomsbury, staying in a little *pension* where I have gone ever since I was a school girl. As usual, we had known for hours beforehand that there was to be a raid, and, at midnight, we were in the square, watching. English people are advised, during a raid, either to go into their cellars, or else to stand on the first floor between the angles of two walls. Possibly there may be some who take the advice. My own observation has been that they like to see the show from the streets.

My landlady was standing beside me, and we were watching the searchlights. Across from us was a vacant lot, and behind this the backs of a row of houses which fronted on a certain famous

square. Suddenly I found myself not looking at the sky, but at a certain window on the fourth floor of the row. There was a dim light in the room behind it. Every other window was dark, as this one should have been.

"That blind over there is not drawn," I said to the landlady. "Somehow, it makes me feel uneasy. Let us watch it."

We did, missing part of the flight of the Zeppelin. But we were rewarded. From the open window came a broad sweep of powerful light. It was as wide as a plank; it stretched forth fully forty feet; and for quite fifteen seconds it remained there. Wondering and indignant as I was, I could not but admire that German signaller for braving his own death; if the Zeppelin watchers saw his message, telling them that they were above London and ought now to drop bombs, and if they obeyed, he in his fourth-story eerie might be blown to nothingness.

But that is not what happened to him. The next morning I got the number of the house, and, tucking my landlady under my arm, I sought the nearest police station. I was already known to the desk inspectors as one of the meek aliens who had applied for an identification book. But on this morning I did not humbly wait their pleasure. I demanded to see the head inspector, and would not have anyone else fubbed off upon me.

I knew that if the head inspector had had a shilling for every spy story he had heard, he

would be reasonably well-to-do. So I set out to impress him. I began by assuming a "my good man" manner, which would be sure to count. Then, after telling my story, I said,

"Now, I know what I saw. But if I am wrong, I am quite willing to make myself ridiculous, just on the chance of trapping a spy. If the people in that house are honest they won't mind being searched any more than I mind being ridiculous. Moreover, I am not coming back tomorrow to ask you how it all turned out."

The chief inspector was impressed. He struggled visibly, however, and said,

"Of course, madame, you, being an American, don't understand about our fogs. It might just have been the street lamp shining out under the fog that you saw."

This was "a bit thick." I even felt my docile landlady bristling. So I said,

"My good man, do you think, after what I 've said, that you need offer me an explanation like that?"

He laughed in an embarrassed way, and said,

"No, madame, I do not."

We walked out, triumphantly, and my landlady saw to it that I had the largest portion of dessert for dinner. Ten minutes after we had left the police station we saw a group of policemen entering the suspected house. The next day that fourth-floor room was vacant. We knew it, because the milk bottle disappeared off the sill, the

window was not again opened, and the blind was kept down.

A few days before I went to France I saw another Zeppelin raid, saw it rather fully, with no distraction by spies. Already I had seen the Zeppelin that had soared so insolently over the sea and the marshes, expecting to feel its way to London, and guided by the gleam of the Thames, and perhaps by German signallers, to drop bombs on Woolwich Arsenal. It had come to grief in Essex, and had sunk into a meadow. The officers and crew had set it afire, but only the envelope had burned. It looked like the silver skeleton of some prehistoric monster, as it lay, the length of a city block, dwarfing the little farmhouse before which it had settled. Very harmless it appeared, with British architects and engineers working upon it, and mastering all its secrets; quite bereft of any predatory significance.

I was thinking of it the day of the great raid. My business in England was done, and I was free to go to France, free to realize the war at last. I had been spending the day in Essex, and as I went Londonwards in the twilight, all over the train there was a warm whisper. The Zeppelins were coming! The train moved slowly. People saw to it that the blinds were rigidly drawn down. In the station, as I walked towards the exit, two or three strangers stopped me and told me of the coming invasion. No cab was in sight, so I took a tram to Tottenham Court Road. I

was the only passenger, and the conductor passed the time by telling me how, three months before, one of these very trams, as like to the one I was on as one pea is to another, was struck by a bomb from a Zeppelin, and those who were not immediately killed died hours after in frightful agony!

When I reached my *pension* there was a great crowd in the square, waiting for the Zeppelin, unafraid, sure of the power of British anti-aircraft guns. The little English maid who brought me my tea every morning took her station behind me. I could hear her grating her teeth with rage.

"Drat them Huns," she muttered.

"Please call them Germans, Elsie," I begged. "Of course we want them to die. But they are doing what they think is right. For your own sake, not theirs, don't call them Huns. You don't want to go mad with hatred and bitterness, as the Germans have."

Elsie sniffed. Silently, intently, we all watched the sky. Slim searchlights swept over it, like long, feeling fingers, — a dozen of them. Suddenly into the blue star-strewn arch sprang an irregular, wraith-like oval of light. It swung over the sky, swifter than any bird, thin as a summer cloud, a keen spy of the air. It paused in its soaring, and, revealed by it, a Zeppelin, beautifully defined, looking like a silver shuttle, drifted across the sky. We held our breath. Suddenly the Zeppelin darted and swerved, as if it knew it was trapped. Frantically it sought to escape

the searchlight, while the spectators cheered and clapped as we do at a Fourth of July celebration.

Then an explosive bullet must have hit the envelope, for the silver changed to yellow-red, and then to crimson. Now the Zeppelin looked like a huge cigar. Slowly it turned, nose down, still holding its shape. Then great tongues of flame shot out from it, and it fell for swift, fiery miles. I thought of those strong lines in *Paradise Lost,* depicting the long fall of Satan, and I wished that Milton's eye could have seen this sight, and clothed it in immortal verse.

My eyes fastened absently on Elsie's exultant face. Mindful of tips, she subdued her expression, but still she had the look of the cat who swallowed the canary, as she said to me, piously,

"God knows I don't wish them poor Germans any 'arm, ma'am, but I am very glad they are all burned to a crisp!"

Much later, when the streets and the sky were empty, an English sentinel airship swept aloft suddenly, but as if softly; two great searchlights soared with it, enveloped it, and then made a splendid silver cross, in the midst of which it rested, rounded, golden, beautiful. I could have fancied it the Holy Grail. It was a beneficent, a purifying, sight. And again I thought of that little home in the Marne, and hoped that all was well with it. If not that, then I hoped, passionately, that after this war every nation might rebuild for the better.

Death in what I had seen that night, but beauty too. This war that has befallen the world seems chaotic waste, but already people have begun to rebuild. What if all that has happened is just the vast complexity of fate at which it is useless to marvel, upon which the world must rise to another and nobler fate? What if the bravery and self-sacrifice and loss, the stupidity and cruelty, will pave the way to a new order of living? The war has shown the amazing courage of the world, the amazing uselessness of ideals and people in which we believed, the equally amazing efficiency of those who seemed of little worth. What if, beneath the complexity which muddled us before the war, there was a deeper simplicity, — only we had not reached it! What if there are deeps of the human spirit to which our codes and creeds and philosophies have not yet carried us? It would seem as if men had gone down into the very abyss of hell and yet had found God there. Old hopes are ruined, but a new and sounder faith will come, — the new sun rise, bringing the new day.

CHAPTER III

On to Paris

England was brave, was wonderful, but France was my objective. There came a day when, all formalities over, I prepared to cross the Channel. Most mysteriously I was told that I could not cross the day I meant to. I might come back every day to ask. Other travellers went to Southampton on the chance that the officers did not know what they were talking about. Three days later I met them in Southampton, half sheepish, half impatient. Meanwhile I preferred London.

The day I set out I had occasion to go, by underground, to Charing Cross Station. The underground train was full of soldiers, returning to the front. Their eyes, — I have seen nothing so moving in all this war as the eyes of the English soldiers going back to the front. Their faces are steady, rather blank; the eyes are glazed, remote, opaque, as if to hide the horror of war from those who have not directly experienced it; or else resigned, sad, like the eyes of old, old people who have long since passed beyond wonder and questioning. Lads of twenty with the eyes of ancient men, an inferno of searing history behind them and to come; they are the same age as our sopho-

more boys, but matured by abnormal experience, carefree youth dead forever. They have seen what they can never tell us, what they would not tell us if they could. Their experience has given them a dreadful solitariness, has shut a part of their souls away even from those they love most. They have a silent communion of spirit with each other — perhaps with the enemy; but to us their eyes say that they have known a terrible loneliness and strangeness, a terrible wonder over the meaning of slaughter and pain and grief. Life has suddenly become concentrated, abnormal. A simple man gains his philosophy slowly through the years; then what has he now, to withstand this black Gargantuan horror that has reversed his quiet English life? Nothing but endurance. His eyes become inscrutable, — and he waits.

Many wore on their sleeves the shining stripes which symbolize wounds taken for England. Heavy equipment lay across their knees or at their feet, and beside each was some woman dear to him. The faces of the women were determinedly cheerful or smiling, never turned quite directly towards the men. The faces of the soldiers, — I felt that even by an involuntary glance I had intruded, had seen too deeply into the secret, brave, splendid souls of men going back to France, perhaps to die, knowing all the dreadful forms in which death could come, the hurling earthquake agonies, instant or long drawn out, by which a man may be cast through the Black Gates that are the last known outposts of the world of war.

Many of them will come home nerve broken, and lay their sick heads for comfort on some woman's breast; many more will lie at man's lowest and yet highest level, head deep in Earth, all pain and strangeness, all hate and mercy and forgiveness done with forever. They will be well at rest in the noble plantations of the dead.

Only once did the calculated cheerfulness of any of the women break down. A sergeant with two gold stripes across his sleeve held his little flaxen-haired girl on his arm, looking at her intently, as if he wanted to take her innocent smiles and words away with him for sanctuary in the monstrous days to come. A soldier friend opposite leaned forward and said,

"Give me the kiddie, Jim. She leans across your old bone as if it was a five-barred gate, and it 's none too strong yet."

The father shook his head and smiled.

"Thank God for the ache she gives my arm," he said.

His wife bit her lip, and heavy tears dropped on her cheeks. The women near enough to have heard looked out of the windows into the darkness rushing by. The sergeant had struck the chord of Home; we knew what it cost him to leave all he was leaving, and what it cost his wife to let him go; and we all knew he represented hundreds of thousands of men in all the warring countries.

The train stopped; the soldiers lifted their

equipment, the desultory talk ceased, and we filed silently up the stairs and into the sunshiny court of Charing Cross Station. A convoy of wounded soldiers had just arrived, and the ambulances were taking them away. We could see the inert figures laid in tiers and covered with dark blankets, nurses in attendance. The spectators, obedient to the order for quiet, merely waved or cried soft "bravos"; and as the ambulances moved out of the courtyard, the flower sellers at the gates flung handfuls of roses and violets across the feet of the wounded men.

In the station I fixed my eyes on constables and porters and canteen workers, but no such evasion could make this scene one of ordinary departure, or could shut away the pervasive atmosphere of patriotism and love and grief. Against the will seeped into consciousness the solemn pathos of farewells restrained, broken, passionate; all brave and all sacrosanct because made under the shadow of death. None of these men and women forgot that one of the wings of death is called victory; no man would have stayed and no woman would have held him, but as they parted, they gave each other up.

There was a rush of feet, a sudden raining of voices, calls of "Good-bye," "Good luck," "Come back soon," and then a young soldier shouted,

"It's the women who are winning this war, not us fellows! Cheer-o for the war women!"

The train moved off with general cheers for all the women on the fighting line in England, and with who knows what silent prayers for each man's woman. And I bowed my head, as I had so many times, before the sheer bravery and nobility of just common men and women. Ours, — and the enemy's too; right cause and wrong cause, they are fed by the ideals and self-sacrifice of just the average man and woman, rising to whatever heights of abnegation are demanded.

It was dark when our train set out from London. There was a thin man in black whose face I distrusted; it seemed at once too affable and too reticent. There was a little Frenchwoman, married to an Englishman, who was a prisoner in Germany; she was going back to her own people in Lorraine. There was a young Scotch girl from Aberdeen, going to teach English in Paris, and a sad, pretty girl, married just five days before her officer husband went back to the front, and now summoned to France because he was mortally wounded.

Poor, blighted, lovely creature! Her grief broke through her English reserve and her eyes begged me to tell her all the stories I knew of men who had been expected to die and who had got well.

"I thought we loved each other so much that he could n't die," she whispered.

Many a young bridegroom goes to the front with that faith deep in his heart, and who knows

how often it may hold off death? Faith and hope are mighty forces. No one knows just what they may achieve. The fresh votaries of a love that is deep always believe it will triumph over death. It is a cruel heart that would voice a doubt.

Southampton; porters; a darkish waiting-room, where we sat on benches till our turn came to have our passports examined. Shrewd-eyed men looked at them, and at us, and passed us on.

"It 's verra simple," said the Scotch girl.

"Just you wait till you get to the other side, miss," said the door warder with grim relish, — "that is, if you get over."

Regretfully we left him, because he looked as if he had a tale to unfold. But the porter who carried our bags was of similar pessimistic disposition. He told us that there had been no boat allowed to cross for three days, because there were two German submarines in the Channel. They had been sunk or taken, but there were rumors that another had nosed its way in. If that were true, he said, as we walked beside him on the shadowy dock, then either we should not be allowed to cross, or else we should be allowed, and might be submarined. In any case, we should be uncomfortable, as the sea was rough, and the boat would have three times the usual number of passengers, owing to the delay.

"However," he said, gloomily, "the boat is safe enough. That is, she was condemned six months before the war, but she 's been carrying

passengers this thirty-five years, and nothing has happened to her yet."

This was so delicious that I laughed, and he looked at me chidingly. I could not forbear saying what I knew was in his mind.

"But if civilians will cross over," I said, "and take up the room that should belong to soldiers, then they deserve whatever happens to them."

The thin man in black, just behind us, laughed with obvious appreciation, and both the Scotch girl and I somehow resented his joining in our little party.

"You 're no verra fearful," said the Scotch girl.

"It is n't exactly courage," I confessed, "but I 'm always so dreadfully ill crossing that I would as soon drown as not. And if we were submarined, I am sure it would cure me of sea-sickness."

I had offered to chaperone her, and her sober look said that a chaperone ought not to be flippant. But I was not. As she said next day, she had not realized till she met me how sea-sick a person could get.

Fate had dealt me the scurvy trick of an upper berth. And the moment I looked at the stewardess I knew that she would be but a broken reed to lean upon. She was less than that. She disappeared at eleven o'clock, and no subsequent ringing of bells, or heart-rending groans lured her out of her hiding place. I still think it was weak

in me to give her a tip, but I was afraid she might have a son at the front who needed tobacco. It was a bad night, but the Scotch girl and I got through it by thinking of how much worse off the men in the trenches were. In the gray dawn, too spent to speak, we somehow got dressed, and clung to each other on a damp deck, until a stewardess had mercy on us and brought us bitter but reviving tea.

We had to wait several hours before we could dock. The pretty, pale wife of the wounded officer paced up and down the deck in front of us, counting the minutes till we should be released. Later, we stood in line, looking down on the cobbled stones of Havre, and the tall, shuttered, water-side buildings. The wives of wounded officers were taken off first, then the Red Cross nurses, then officers and privates returning from leave, and then we civilians. We were glad to know that the wife of the wounded officer would be presently on her way to the base hospital at Etâples.

An office, then, where we and our passports were to be examined. We filed into a room where, behind long, narrow tables, sat officers in horizon-blue uniforms, some commissioned and some non-commissioned. Their faces were grave, and their eyes were keen. I had the same emotion as when I went before the alien board at Liverpool, — glad I was there for a legitimate purpose, and yet with an insane flicker of fear that maybe after all

I was guilty of something. I went first, then came the Scotch girl, and then the thin man in black. As I bent towards the first questioner, I noticed that the forehead of the man in black was bedewed with a tiny line of beads.

My passports, my letters and my replies seemed satisfactory. I passed around the corner table, and there I waited for the Scotch girl. But at once I forgot her. For in front of the thin man in black four officials had drawn their heads together. They rose; they questioned him; he wiped his brow; he was affable and explanatory. Then he was excited; his pale face grew gray. He was summoned to another room; he protested; his low voice became suddenly loud. Then he made a curious little upward gesture as if of renunciation, and went out. But he was no longer affable; he was a graven image.

The Scotch girl had been listening hard. She leaped for me, and said,

"It 'll go gey ill with yon man. He 's a spy. They knew it in London, it seems, but they let him through to be taken in France. The witnesses are on this side. I suppose they 'll shoot him in Paris."

That little Scotch girl got down to essentials. We were both so thrilled that we scarcely saw the picturesque phases of the customs room, where the smiling examiners were women, with an instinct for those who would be likely to smuggle. My examiner opened only one of my suitcases,

which was lucky, as the dutiable soap and matches were in the top stratum of the other.

No cab to be had; a long wait in a tram; the railroad station, where we checked our hand-baggage; then luncheon in a little café full of officers. The two waitresses seemed unable to serve them without embracing them, which is, perhaps, of the fortunes of war. We were badly served, but too glad to be on solid earth to feel any regrets. Afterwards, by special favor, a long jaunt to a camp, where we saw some German prisoners repairing the roads. I had just been preaching a sermon to the Scotch girl to the effect that bitterness and hate were disintegrating, and that I did not propose to let myself hate anything about the Germans except their type of military spirit. So, as we passed the enclosure behind which they were road-building, pretending that we were not looking at them, I did not hate those men in the round caps. But I confess it did me good to see them working for France, making up a bit for what the Germans have exacted from the civilians of northern France.

Back to the station, then; our hand luggage retrieved, a stout old porter bespoken; as soon as the gates were open, we made a quick dash to the train, where we had corner seats. We sat smiling at each other, pleased with the soft gray coloring of our compartment, reading with interest the warning: "Be silent! Take care! The ears of the enemy are listening." Just beneath the win-

dow-sill, we read the order, in French, not to put our heads and arms out of the window. Beneath that had been the same caution in German; all blacked out now. The Frenchwoman whose husband was a prisoner came in, tentatively. We welcomed her; she took a third corner, and then closed her eyes against us. Poor creature! I guessed what her thoughts might be, back in France once more, without the husband with whom, not so many years since, she had gone so happily to a strange land.

"It will be so nice to talk with you all evening," said the little Scotch girl.

That, however, was practically the last remark she made to me, for into the compartment came two English officers, one a lieutenant, a nice-looking boy of perhaps twenty-two, the other an unbelievably handsome captain of forty. He and the Scotch girl fell almost at once into talk, while the lieutenant and I read and talked alternately. The lieutenant told me they were sailing for Egypt from Marseilles. I asked, idly, when the boat went.

"Day after to-morrow," he said, "but I have a feeling that the captain means to miss it, and if he does, there is n't another for two weeks!"

Later at the dinner table I discovered why the captain meant to miss the boat. He sat at a table across the aisle from the lieutenant and the little Frenchwoman and me, and now and then I saw

him, forgetful of the Scotch girl, looking out of the window. Once I heard him say,

"I have n't been to Paris for seventeen years, — not since I was a student in the Beaux Arts."

It was wicked of me, but as we all passed out of the dining-car, and he still looked dreamy, I could not resist saying to him,

"I hope you will recapture your romance."

"Ah, I don't think I will," he said, wistfully. Then he blushed crimson, and looked as if he would have liked to punish us both. A little later he forgave us both, and would have talked, but I wanted to look at France under the full moon.

Such beautiful, peaceful country! Who, gazing at the silver sheen that lay over fields and quiet houses, could have realized that France was at war! It almost seemed as if even a ruthless conqueror, looking at the peace-loving land, asleep under that flooding radiance, would have withheld his clutching hand. Opposite me the Frenchwoman gazed out with wide eyes, seeing, perhaps, not her own land, but that unknown German prison camp where was held the man she loved.

Paris! A tall old clergyman to meet the Scotch girl; the young lieutenant saying he was going to the Ritz; the handsome captain not saying where he was going, but still looking romantic; the little Frenchwoman suddenly turning, helpless and nervous. She did not know where she ought to stay; I think she had some hazy notion of going to the Gare du Nord, and sitting there till the

next morning when she could entrain for Lorraine. She had suddenly turned into a little fearful provincial, afraid of Paris.

I took her to the hotel I had chosen, and next morning I escorted her to the Gare du Nord. It was still dark when we called our cab. The streets of Paris were a deep blue-black, echoing, vast, lit here and there by a flickering light. There was a sort of high brooding spirit over those streets, as if they were waiting for life to pour into them and would accept that life, whatever its nature.

When we got to the Gare du Nord, it was not quite so dark. A sort of crepuscular blue lay everywhere, and against it poured group after group of French soldiers. I thought that I had already realized the war, that my imagination and my sympathy had been fully sounded. But there was that in the faces and the souls of those men in horizon-blue that leaped all barriers, was outspoken and clear in meaning. Looking into their faces, I felt the war as not only the greatest tragedy of this world, not only a personal sorrow but a crime against all the ages that have gone as well as those to come, a crime against whatever other worlds there may be. There, in that deep azure dawn, I could hear the voices of young poets, dead before their time, calling out for the years that had been denied them; scientists, bearing in their ghostly hands the tally of the discoveries that would have benefited mankind; humanitarians, who would have lifted the woe of

the world, — I seemed to feel the weight of their wonder that their days and their deeds had not been fulfilled. I seemed to hear the voices of unborn children, asking for the gift of life. In every land, this world over, the girls who should have been their mothers will go to their graves, the best half of their lives forbidden them.

It was the look of the men in horizon-blue that brought the war home to me with wringing pain. Not two days before I had seen English soldiers going back to the front, and that had been a poignant enough sight. But at least the Englishmen had just come from their homes. Not so these Frenchmen. Many of them were from the invaded districts; they did not know whether any longer they had families and homes. And all of them knew that France was bleeding to death. Their faces, patient, immobile, bore the mark of a tragedy that went beyond personal grief. Brave men in blue! The white flame of France; their very souls were burnt offerings.

They stood there in the station, some with women, some alone. They made strange silhouettes, so grotesquely burdened were their backs, with motley equipment — bags, canteens, shoes, tins, even loaves of bread. The men who were alone went out to the platform where they were to take the train. The others remained in the station, saying good-bye. I passed through them, my head lowered, but even so I could not entirely shut out the sight of those hundreds of

poignant partings. The packs on the ground, the clinging tragic arms, the murmured words, — and more than all, the silence; each little group separated infinitely from every other little group; each afraid the parting was eternal. A soldier was trying to put his little girl in her mother's arms; the child held to him, begging him not to go, while his wife stood by, smiling, with white, pinched lips. I heard a man say to a girl, "I shall come back, for you are waiting." The men left their wives without turning back. I have never seen a Frenchwoman weep, nor a Frenchman look back at what he is leaving. What a microcosm of the anguish of all France!

I forgot that little home on the Marne that had called me so persistently. I never thought of it again as standing out separately from the rest of the anguish of France. It was just part of that great foreground of grief of the beautiful martyred land, which has been for so long the beloved pleasure ground of the world. I realized as I had not before how changed must be all of France. I knew that I had come to a new Paris, — to Paris, no longer the gay and debonair, but the city of unshed tears, the city of the dauntless heart.

CHAPTER IV

The City of the Dauntless Heart

Once I read a description of Paris that expressed very adroitly the conventional idea of it as a playground.

". . . there came before her eyes a picture of that vivid city, putting on her jewels in the frivolous lute-stringed twilight. Like a city of fireflies it flashed into her imagination, and the sound of it came back to her, gay and sad as one of its own chansonettes, that wonderful murmur of Paris, like the sound of a great shallow river, blended with the singing of many sirens; that seems to be calling you — to come and drown, to come and drown, to come and drown."

To the people who live in Paris, who do not feel its romance as the tourist does, — or did — this description may have less meaning than that of Zola in his novel "Paris," where Pierre, standing on a height in the diffused golden light of sunset, sees "all Paris spread itself out at his feet, a limpid lightsome Paris, beneath the pink glow of that spring-like evening. The endless billows of house roofs showed forth with wonderful distinctness, and one could have counted millions of chimney stacks and the little black streaks of the windows. The buildings rising into the calm air

seemed like the anchored vessels of some fleet arrested in its course, with lofty masting, glittering in the sunset. And never before had Pierre so distinctly observed the divisions of that human ocean. Eastward and northward was the city of manual toil, with the rumbling and the smoke of its factories. Southward, beyond the river, was the city of study, of intellectual labor, so calm, so utterly serene. And on all sides the passion of trade ascended from the central districts, where the crowds rolled and scrambled amidst an everlasting uproar of wheels; while westward the city of the happy and powerful ones, those who fought for sovereignty and wealth, spread out its piles of palaces amidst the slowly reddening light."

Before the war there was perhaps the tendency to interpret Paris according to some preconceived idea one carried there. But now each visitor finds his own Paris, a new, grave Paris, set to the note of war. The playground Paris was perhaps best symbolized by the Champs Elysées, that empress-like Avenue, glorious, from the Place de l'Etoile, under the arch of which the men in horizon-blue will march when victory has come, to the wide Place de la Concorde; and further, by the Rue de Rivoli, that sparkling street of the ladies, where the gear and gauds of all the world are spread out to allure and conquer. How triumphant were these streets in leisure, gaiety, charm and color! Changed now, they show courage and cheerfulness, but no gaiety, and the prevailing colors are

AMERICANS WORKING FOR FRANCE AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE AMERICAN FUND FOR FRENCH WOUNDED AT THE ALCAZAR

the horizon-blue of the soldiers, and the black of the widows. Lift the eyes above the street level, and look towards the river, and there is indeed a vision of Paris as she was, — a city lovely as a dream, rising above the Seine, the lordly bridges, and the straight, bordering trees. But keep the gaze lowered and straight, and there is the new Paris, symbolized by men in blue, marching to the trains that are to take them back to the front-line trenches.

The day after I reached Paris, as I walked down these wide streets, my eyes were filled with a picture I had not seen — the picture of the soldiers of France, on the day of mobilization, marching, laughing and shouting and singing in their dark blue coats and red trousers. They sang the *Marseillaise;* they improvised doggerel couplets about the Kaiser and the Germans. They called out greetings to the civilians on the sidewalk. They said they would be back in three months, carrying Alsace and Lorraine with them. It was a glad, united, confident Paris. Perhaps in the exultant crowds there might have been old men and women who remembered the Franco-Prussian days, who knew well that the long red march of war is slow. But if so, their sad faces of warning were disregarded. Paris laughed, and the men swung down the Champs Elysées to the slaughter of the Marne, and those who marched through that went on to the bloody morass of Verdun.

That was the vision I saw in the wide empty

avenues, and even as I looked on these dream figures, real ones took their place. Down the Champs Elysées to the Place de la Concorde marched two companies of men in blue. They were laden and weary. They did not sing or speak or look at the thin stream of people on the sidewalks. As they struck across the Place de la Concorde, I noticed that the lap of the figure that represents the city of Strasbourg was piled high with wreaths and flowers that concealed the black band which shows that Germany still holds Strasbourg. Some of the soldiers glanced up. That statue symbolized to them the greedy hands of Germany at the throat of France. They were ready to die to prevent further murderous theft, yet their faces no longer showed deep determination, wild enthusiasm, only a weary stoicism. The glory is departed; their teeth are set to endure the bitter, monotonous, grinding pressure.

As they passed into the Rue de Rivoli, and I went back up the Champs Elysées, I saw other signs of the new Paris, — the convalescent soldiers, sitting languidly on the benches, or perhaps leaning on the arms of friends or wives; the women in black, leading little fatherless children with crêpe bands on their arms, the little closed jewel shops and *patisseries,* great hotels changed into hospitals or *vestiaires* or *ouvroirs.* Ah, it was poignant, — and yet the faces I saw were not, as a rule, sad. Serious, and yet often smiling. People are glad of a chance to smile.

The first smile I discovered, however, came from me. Opposite the underground station Alma a gendarme was trying to arrest a man. He and his prospective prisoner were arguing and a knot of half a dozen people were taking sides, for and against the arrest. That lasted for fully half an hour, I looking on and listening delighted, while two wounded soldiers were delighted in turn at my amusement, which they could not understand. But fancy a policeman in New York or Chicago arguing with a law-breaker as to whether he did or did not deserve arrest!

"Come along to the police station and talk there," would be the kindest remark he would get.

But this gendarme was saying,

"Monsieur, I am desolated; but, in fine, monsieur will have to give himself the trouble of accompanying me. This way, if monsieur pleases!"

After the gendarme had taken away his prisoner, with all the solicitude of a trained nurse, the two wounded soldiers utilized the crowd by running a race to the underground station. One had a cork leg and one a wooden leg. They hobbled along, laughing, gallant. The crowd smiled, — but with a stricture of the throat.

It is chiefly the children who are spontaneous in their smiles. Across the street I could hear their childish peals of laughter coming from the midst of another crowd. I crossed the street to

see what it was, — a play of marionettes, — Les Guignoles. Little children sat on benches, looking and laughing at the jumping dolls. Outside was a fringe of black-clad nurses and mothers and a few wounded soldiers, smiling gravely at the joy of these little ones. Perhaps they remembered that they were pledged to offer their lives in order that little ones such as these might grow up into a world where war was not.

"Take care, Guignol," the little voices cried. "Strike quickly, Guignol! Hurry!"

The crowd grew thicker, looking not so much at the marionettes as at the children.

"Ah, ha!" said a poilu, who held a little girl in his arms. "That's good fighting there; see the blow Guignol got on his pate! That's war! *C'est la guerre!*"

I was to learn that the expression "*C'est la guerre*" (it's war) does not invariably stand for horrors. Whenever a Parisian can say lightly "*C'est la guerre*" he likes to do it, especially to a stranger. Every time it was said to me it had some connection, superficial or vital, with the high cost of living, though in the beginning I did not perceive this. The first time it was said to me was a few days after I reached Paris, while I was waiting patiently for permission to go to the front.

I drifted into a little teashop with the idea one has that where there is the sign "English spoken" the tea will be unusually good. As usual, the per-

son who spoke English was out, and the tea was good. But there was no napkin and the wonderful French cakes were sticky. I requested a napkin. The waiter looked amused, shrugged his shoulders, thrust out his hands palms upward, and said:

"*Ah, madame, c'est impossible; c'est la guerre!*"

He spoke and looked over his smile with just the faintest touch of reproach, just enough to induce in me the remorseful thought that I wanted luxuries when there were soldiers in the trenches who did not have common comforts. I saw other people surreptitiously wiping their fingers on the table-cloth, looking dreamily the while across the room, or else leaning forward and chatting animatedly as if to disguise what they were doing, and so —

That same evening I went to dine in a restaurant in the Rue Léopold Robert, famous the Latin Quarter over for the frescoes and pictures on the walls done by New York and Chicago artists, for a signed portrait of Victor Hugo, and for other unexpected pleasures. I sat down at a table from which four people had risen and, my mind being on linen, noticed the good yeoman service the table-cloth had done. From all signs it had been used for luncheon as well as dinner. I dined, being joined by three strangers who ate frugally and departed. At the cheese stage I felt eyes, and, looking up, saw four people waiting

for my table. They were gazing hungrily right through me, just wanting my place, hypnotized by their own desire. Under that stare nothing but the laws of gravity could have kept me in my seat. I fled and let them sit down, standing by the kitchenette till my bill was made out. There was one illegible item for which I could not account — ten cents for what?

"What is this that I have eaten, Henriette?" I asked.

"Ah, madame, '*couvrir*' — chiefly for the table-cloth. The laundry assassinates me with the charges. *C'est la guerre!*"

I counted, say, eight people at the cloth for luncheon, and the twelve I had seen with my own eyes at dinner — two dollars. That diligent cloth paid for itself every day.

When I entered my hotel that night I discovered that the ceiling light was none too bright and that there was no reading-lamp. I rang for the *garçon* and ordered one. He said that he would speak *toute suite* to the housekeeper, who was now dining. I allowed her plenty of time to dine, and then went in search of her. She was all plump obligingness.

"But yes, madame; I will find a lamp for madame."

Madame thought it prudent to accompany her on the search, and was led to a closet, on the top shelf of which stood two lamps. The housekeeper greeted them with an exclamation of ap-

proval. I did not, for I saw that the connection of each was broken. She acted as if she had discovered this only when she took them down.

"Ah, unhappily they are broken! I am so sorry that madame cannot have a lamp."

"Get them mended," suggested madame.

"Ah, but impossible. *C'est la* —"

"Yes, I know, it 's the war; but are there no electricians left in Paris?"

I gathered that they were all at the front except a few, who somehow could not repair lamps because it was the war.

The next morning was evidently the time for weekly presentations of bills at the hotel. There was the sum per diem which the proprietor had mentioned to me, and at the bottom a neat little addition of ten per cent. I sought this man, an agreeable person whose charm took the edge from all financial transactions.

"What is this ten per cent item for?" I asked.

"*Ah, madame, c'est la guerre.*"

He indicated, delicately, a notice on the wall, none too conspicuously placed. It announced that on a certain date the hotel proprietors had met at the Palais d'Orsay, and, in view of the increased cost of living and to save themselves from disaster, had decided to increase their charges by ten per cent. The notice added that at the meeting nearly all the hotel proprietors agreed to the proposition that guests should be informed of the change by

signs placed in the establishment — a pleasant muffled way of doing things.

I went to call on a friend who keeps house. She was dressed for marketing, and I thought her ecstatic greetings of me were touched with a hint of appraisal.

"You don't carry a muff?" she questioned; "a large muff?"

I replied that I occasionally carried one forth, but never carried it back unless it was attached to me.

"Well, if you would n't mind wearing one of mine," she said, "and coming with me, then, you see, you could buy a pound of loaf sugar and so could I, at every shop where we stop. I 've not got a lump left, and no shop will sell you more than a pound at a time, and I simply must have some because of Celeste."

"Celeste?" I questioned.

"My waitress. She is doing her bit for France by having me give teas for the young French girls I know, to which our ambulance boys are invited. 'Why not,' says Celeste, 'the men they should be fiancéed to are at the front, or dead! Why not give the nice American boys an opportunity?' So I do, but Celeste insists on loaf sugar."

We descended to the street, while my friend bewailed the arrogance of Celeste and her sort, who could so easily get work now in the munition factories at seven francs a day.

"*C'est la guerre*," she sighed. "The only

thing that binds her to me, besides these little teas I give, is the little baby from Epernay. At the time the Germans came in there a French soldier found this baby, apparently only a few hours old, on a doorstep. He was on his way to Paris, and he took it along, under his coat. For three days neither he nor the baby had anything to eat, but he fed it water and kept it warm. In Paris he gave it to his *marraine,* who is my next-door neighbor. The *concierge* of his *marraine* is his mother; this mother is also Celeste's aunt, and they are all mad over the baby, — a beautiful blue-eyed girl who sings like a bird, and of whose parentage none of us has been able to find any trace."

That was a pretty little story; one comes across them now at every turn in or out of the war zone. I mused over it while my friend moaned over sugar tickets and butter tickets, eggs at a dollar a dozen, and paper that had gone up four hundred per cent, while alcohol had gone up seven hundred per cent.

At the street corner we waited in vain for a taxi. We hailed drivers, who kissed their hands to us and passed on, or shouted that they had no gasoline, or were going to their *déjeuner*, or to meet a brother just back from the front. So we went by the crowded metropolitan to the shopping region and got more sugar than we should have, and returned weary, feeling all the guilty relish of hoarders.

"Never mind," my friend said, "we 're doing this for the French girls."

On the way back we passed a coal yard. A long line of people stood beside it, carrying baskets and sacks. There were stout housewives in blue aprons, some with little girls beside them; there were bareheaded, bent, old women; there were old men on canes; there were little boys in long black aprons. All of them had the look of having been waiting a long time, but they were very patient. They had the air one sees in the soldiers — brave, weary, tenacious; it is the spirit of all France. When I spoke to some of them they said they had been standing for hours, that none of them could have more than twenty pounds of coal, and that coal was fifty dollars a ton.

"I 'm afraid it will be very cold for the poor this winter," I said that night to Jeanne, my old mending-woman. "It is a good thing the Government is going to take still more strenuous measures. At least they are talking — "

"Oh, la, la," cried Jeanne; "how they talk, these people, and France wasting, wasting. Do not I know? Did they not waste my only son, Pierre, wounded in the leg at the battle of the Marne? A little, little wound that I could have cured! But they sent him, not to a hospital in Paris, seventeen miles from the place where he was shot, but to the very borders of Spain. In all those days of travel the wound was not cared for, and at times he had to walk."

The shipping-room of the A. F. F. W.

Old Jeanne's wrinkled face was grim.

"It is to laugh," she said, her voice hard; "they say we must close the shops at six to save light and heat; but they close them from twelve to two for luncheon; no saving there, because they choose to eat long, long meals. Madame has eaten the luncheon and dinners of these civilians who are telling the soldiers to fight to the end. Two and three meat courses, always. Waste there, eh, madame? But my neighbor, Elise, threw herself and her three children out of the window last Friday because there was not enough to eat and she could not get work. Madame read of it in the papers. And the Apaches, who were good enough soldiers — they have come back discharged from the army without pensions, because they were only consumptive, or had heart trouble, or were not very badly wounded. They too are hungry, madame. The soldiers waste their blood, and the rich waste meat and cake, and the poor have not enough food, and the Government talks of what it will do to save! Ah, la, la! my Pierre dead, and France dying, and the Government talking!"

Waste! What country except Germany is not guilty of it? Certainly we are, in the United States, and even France is. There are wasters in Paris, scarlet ladies who lie in wait even more assiduously than in times of peace for the men who will pay most; decent women who think they must have their mourning of the latest cut; officers

who buy expensive strings of pearls and go back to die in the trenches; gourmands who would eat long meals if Paris were burning as well as bleeding. There are some who adopt the motto of Louis XV: "After us the deluge."

Yet most of the French people are economizing wisely, are trying to make their sacrifices in keeping with those of the men in the trenches who die for them. They plan for a lean future, yet they live by the day, — by the very hour, keeping up a show of courage over grief and suspense. The longer I stayed in Paris the more keenly I felt how heavy were the hearts hidden under the brave, weary smiles. I was constantly stumbling upon some bit of drama or tragedy. Once I was passing a café where a middle-aged man and woman were sitting together at a little table drinking light wine. Their daughter came to them to say that a telegram had arrived, and Jacques, little Jacques, had received the *croix de querre* for rescuing a comrade under fire, — their little Jacques, who had enlisted, who was only seventeen! What friendly hands clasped those of the father and mother! What cries of "*Vive la France!*"

Again I stopped before a building where was being posted the most recent list of those who had died on the field of honor. A woman read her husband's name! That white, stricken face of hers; her blind pushing out of the crowd, that made way for her silently, pitifully; the agonized way she clutched the baby asleep on her breast!

And not ten feet away from her three young girls were smiling over a letter just received from the front, as oblivious to the crowd as she was. An old man who had seen both episodes cast out his hands with a gesture of resignation, of giving up any attempt to explain the events of this sorry world. It reminded me, in some obscure way, of the gesture of the spy whom I had seen taken a few days before at Havre.

Everywhere the sense of unshed tears; in the refugees, where were the people from northern France and from Belgium, who had been harried from their homes by the encroaching Germans; in the *vestiaires* and *ouvroirs* where poor people came for work and for clothes; in the canteens where soldiers, unable to get home, came for food, and for friendship from the gentle women who served them; in those other canteens across the river, in the Latin Quarter, where painters and models and other workers in the arts would have starved but for the kindness of friends. And above all, in the churches! In the streets people must wear that brave badge of courage, a smile. In their own houses they must smile for the sake of each other. Only in the churches dare they be themselves, for they are alone with God.

That little church of Notre Dame des Champs! For decades it has been the church of the soldiers and the women. The soldiers have gone to pray for safety or to give thanks for it; and the women have gone to pray that their men may come home

to them safe and, if possible, sound, and that there may be no more war. On the walls are hung many medals given as thank-offerings by soldiers who survived the Franco-Prussian war. A dim place that church, where the eternal ruby light glows, serene and still, before the high altar. Many little columns of pale flame-topped candles have been lighted by women in honor of the Virgin or their name-saint. Velvet whispers come to one's ears; faint wafts of incense.

And the women, — they kneel before their candles and pray passionately for the men they love. They have forgotten to smile; their tense figures, their anguished faces show the force of their pleading, their suffering. There a woman is swaying back and forth, her soul demanding assurance. The soldiers kneel quietly. One holds his *croix de guerre* in his hands instead of a rosary; it may be that he is making some sort of simple bargain with God. A girl comes in breathless, a candle in one hand, a letter from her lover or perhaps from her husband, in the other. She lights her candle. Her lips move fast; her eyes are far away, perhaps attempting to see an unknown battleground. I remember what Lisette, the *midinette,* said,

"He must have died out there as I prayed, madame. He must, for I was always praying."

The old priest, his face white and sad over his rich vestments, begins to celebrate mass before the high altar. In the dim light the people seem

like blue and black shadows. They droop towards the priest. A faint sigh floats over the congregation. There, at the altar of God, the people of Paris kneel for comfort, for help.

CHAPTER V

Waiting for the War Zone

On the Rue François Premier stands a stately white building, a little way from the Champs Elysées, and flanked on the right by that busy place, the American Clearing House, where our own flag floats, and where the big business of helping to send supplies to the French wounded and needy is conducted with shining efficiency and promptness.

This stately white building is one to which all newspaper correspondents and magazine writers must betake themselves humbly. In it is the Maison de la Presse, which gives permission to writing civilians to visit the war zone. Many writers call themselves for this privilege, and few are chosen. Those few, too, must wait, — and rightly so, because every civilian who uses the railway up to the war zone, or who uses a military motor in the war zone, subtracts just so much from the military welfare of France. Whatever value he may have is secondary in importance to anything that has to do with the business of war.

In London I had already met an important official of the Maison de la Presse. A powerful English friend introduced us with such kind words of the magazines for which I was writing,

and of me, that the official promised, if it were possible, to have arrangements made for my war zone trips by the time I should arrive in Paris. Therefore, when, a month later, I entered that stately building on the Rue François Premier, I did not realize the days of waiting before me. I realized it still less after I had met the other charming Frenchmen who control the destinies of war correspondents.

The only thing that dashed me in that white building was the elevator. It was one of those tiny toy cages which you are supposed to control yourself. I had n't been afraid of submarines or Zeppelins, but I was afraid of that gilded and upholstered box. I felt the way I always do when I am trying to cross Fifth Avenue at Thirty-fourth Street, and cannot believe that the policeman really can hold all that traffic back. How could I ever figure out the way to run it! I waited for ten minutes, timid as any soldier ever was before a bombardment. Then when I saw a man coming to rescue me, shame overpowered me.

" I 'm a voter," I thought, " not a clinging vine. I 'm here to do dangerous things, such as visiting the front."

I touched a button, closed my eyes, and shot upward, while below me I heard a drawling English voice say,

" My word! Just missed the lift! That lady must have been an American, she was so anxious to look after herself! "

A long passage, — a messenger with the important face civilians with long-distance war connection seem to have. I had noticed those important faces in Whitehall. I have seen them since in Washington on the clerks and bellboys of hotels where the Council of National Defense people stay. I have never seen that expression on the faces of the men engaged in the business of fighting and dying.

After that, two delightful hours when I talked to Monsieur Pousot, the head of the Maison de la Presse, and Monsieur Monod, the censor, and Madame Saint-Marie Perrin, the daughter of René Bazu. They all listened to the wishes I expressed to go to this and that place, commended the ideas I had for this and that article, entered with zest into the planning of this and that excursion, and promised that I should go just as soon as it could be managed. Before our talk was over I felt as if I were already on the train.

Monsieur Monod, who has been a professor in one of our universities, and who understands the American tendency to prompt action, warned me that I must not expect to get to the war zone straight away.

"You will understand, madame," he said, "that there are difficulties; the movement of troops; — the many details —!"

Kindly, gentle Monsieur Monod! I have a feeling of the deepest gratitude towards him. He was so patient in reading over and censoring my

badly written notes, so wise and sympathetic in counselling me in any difficulties. The Maison de la Presse has there a valuable official, and America has a good friend. But indeed, all the officials of the Maison de la Presse appreciate the attitude towards France shown in the magazines and newspapers of the United States.

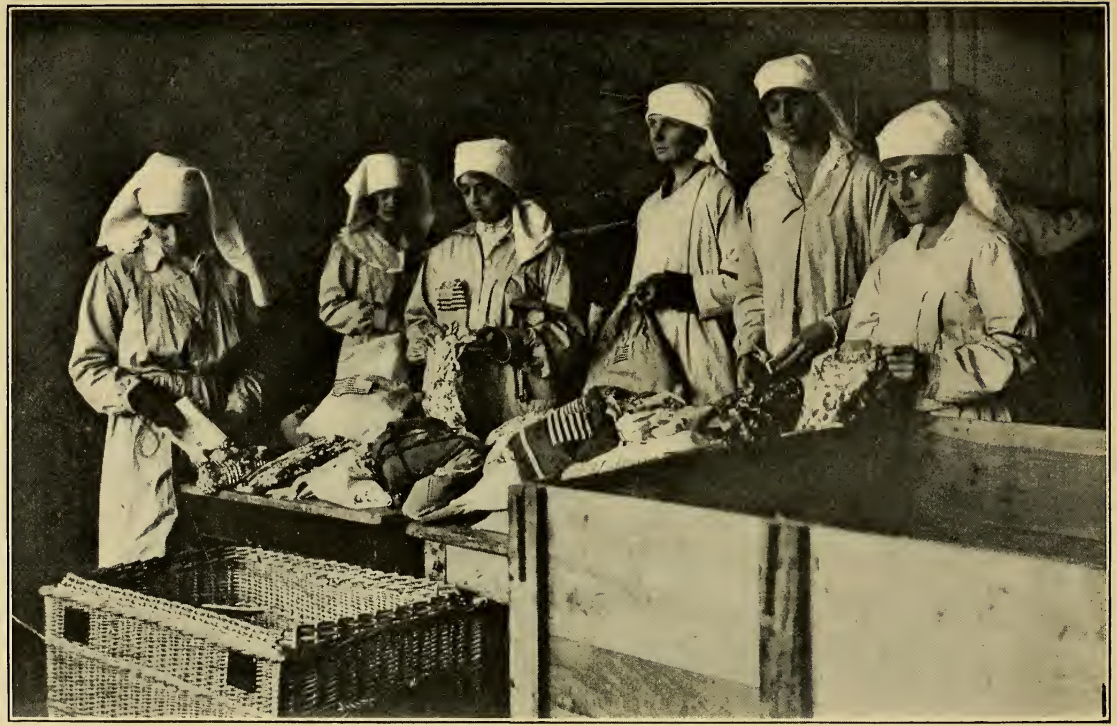
But despite M. Monod's warning, I walked on air out of the Maison de la Presse, and down the Champs Elysées and on to the Place Vendome, and round a corner to my hotel. And there I waited. And waited.

The nicest thing about that hotel, and about my period of waiting, was Eleanor, — and her dog. I mention them together because Eleanor was so fond of him, but I preferred to think of them apart. I saw Eleanor first the evening after my arrival, when I was looking at all the desks in the reception room for a bottle of ink and could not find any — because "*c'est la guerre*," I suppose. Eleanor looked up from a table, and offered her own ink, with such a giving sort of smile, in which blue eyes and soft lips and shadowy dimple and a little gesture all struggled for supremacy. To see Eleanor look and smile and come into a room in her out-going, friendly fashion is worth a journey. As is usual, in war time, we made a short cut to friendship, which was the quicker because I found that I already knew her father.

Eleanor had come over pledged to be a private

secretary in some *ouvroir* outside of Paris, and was now serenely expecting that job to melt away and another to appear. Exactly that happened. Eleanor has been called " the happy-go-lucky sort that falls on her feet." She is n't just that. But she has a serene, smiling way of expecting what she likes to happen to her; she plans for it without exactly seeming to, and when her plans go awry she makes others. She is easy-going in that she never murmurs over bad luck, and smiles no matter what happens.

We sat that first day of our companionship looking out upon the Paris twilight, and making acquaintance with the dog which Eleanor had just bought. He was a bargain, and a beautiful creature, but Eleanor had no more real right to him than a soldier has to a trunk in the trenches. She had no place to keep him, and besides her letter of credit was running out and she had forgotten to write home for funds. She lured the *concierge* into taking care of him, — at a price. Then, presently, she got work in a hospital just outside the city, where she was kept so busy that she scarcely ever saw him. I did n't see him either, but at intervals throughout the nights and the early mornings I heard him, for the *concierge* kept him in the court on which my bedroom looked. Eleanor, herself, is one of those people who would sleep through a San Francisco earthquake or a bombardment. The *garçon* who brought her breakfast had his orders always to wake her; the poor



Another group at the A. F. F. W.

lad did his best, but frequently when he came back to get the tray, Eleanor would be still asleep. If it had been anyone but Eleanor I should have told her, with dark meaning, that there was more poetic justice in a wakeful person keeping a dog than one like herself.

"Eleanor," I would ask meekly, "what pleasure does that dog give you?"

"I like the thought of him," Eleanor would reply; "I like to think he is mine. I like to remember that I gave fifteen dollars for him when he 's worth fifty. I expect to sell him, and make a lot of money off him."

She did not sell him. Without her knowing it she made a present of him! One morning I slept late, for no dog had barked.

"Where 's the dog, Eleanor?" I asked that night, as we sat at dinner in the lower dining-room, which Eleanor chose because there was so much to see in it. "Did you give him away?"

"In a sense I did," said Eleanor, with that little muffled laugh of hers that makes me think of all sorts of young, happy things. "You know that group of Scotch soldiers that passed through here last night? Perhaps you saw them petting the dog? Well, the *concierge* says they needed a mascot, and so —"

I shook my head.

"The Scotch are thrifty," I admitted, "but so is that *concierge*. If he let the mascot go it was n't as a gift."

"That idea also crossed my mind," Eleanor said. "I 'm sure, if I had kept him, I 'd have sold him for sixty dollars, but I 'm glad the soldiers have him."

After that it was Eleanor without the dog who solaced my days of waiting for the war zone, — Eleanor and Paris. The hotel was in the centre of things, and plenty of life flowed through the dining-room and the crowded little foyer where the incoming guests asked for rooms and outgoing guests asked for mail. The lower dining-room glittered with the color of uniforms. Here came French officers, lunching with each other, or with lady friends; English officers, Russians and Italians, and Brazilians. Here came English and Scotch nurses on their way to their hospitals. Here were Americans on business bent, manufacturers of cork legs, of wheeled chairs; traffickers in the sad havoc of war.

There was enough life going on to satisfy me even if I never got to the war zone. Once two serious young Scotch privates in kilts stayed in the hotel for three days. Their leave was too short to go to England, and they had come to Paris, where they knew nobody. For two days they stalked gravely up and down the streets of Paris, alien to all the sights they saw. Meal after meal they sat in silence in the dining-room, gazing blankly about them. A Scotch nurse talked to them. She was pretty and sympathetic, — but middle-aged. She wrung her hands over their loneliness.

"If only I were a young girl," she said; "those poor laddies! For so long they have looked forward to this holiday. I know, as well as if they 'd told me. And now to be in this strange place."

We conspired; we found two nice, pretty, warm-hearted, sensible American girls, and we explained to them that here was their bit right at hand. They did it with zest and tact, and for that last day of their leave those Scotch lads were happy from ten in the morning, when they began to smile, till midnight, when we saw them off in the railway station, loaded with gifts and, I believe, with some joyful memories.

But we did not entirely like the hotel.

"If the *concierge* really did sell your dog — " I said to Eleanor.

"And if the proprietor really is an Austrian," she replied.

"Besides," I said, "I don't feel happy with Victor and Antoinette."

Victor and Antoinette were the valet and chambermaid who were supposed to look after my room. Much as I love the French, much as I revere them for the way they have stood up to this war, there are certain of their customs that will always be alien to me. One is to have a man and woman combine together to do the bedroom work which one, alone, could do quite as well, and more quickly.

"What 's the matter with Victor and Antoinette?" inquired Eleanor. "Your room looks as well kept as mine."

"They aren't properly arranged, those two," I complained. "Antoinette's husband is at Verdun, and her little girl is in the Midi. Victor's wife is working in a munitions factory outside Nancy. It isn't symmetrical, somehow. It's a kind of waste — "

"Your duty," said Eleanor severely, "is to write, not to revise the domestic arrangement of people. Put it down to *c'est la guerre.* The difficulty with you is that you care too much for happy and suitable endings. Start you out writing a story with six persons and you end with three couples."

Then we stopped laughing. This war had made us both anxious for happy endings. We went back to the subject of moving, deciding that a new hotel would help break the period of waiting. For by this time Eleanor was waiting, too, having put powerful influence at work so that she might get to at least one place at the front. She meant to pay for it by some writing.

Once settled in our new hotel we found that it also was suspected of being managed by an Austrian. But we overlooked that, so pleased were we with our spacious dining-room and reception room, and with our *concierge,* Henri, who had lost a leg and two fingers in the war. On his broad breast he wore two medals, and because he was so brave, and because he came from the Marne country that I loved, I forgave him his forgetfulness of messages. This hotel was not

in the heart of Paris; it seemed more directly connected with civilian life or with military life of an unstrenuous type. There was the French officer, on long leave, with his wife, and four little girls with their nurse and governess. Noisy, happy youngsters they were, and attractive; but it was Eleanor's opinion that the father and mother had no right to send those vivacious infants into the dining-room just when most of us were at dinner, coming down themselves much later, when it was quite quiet. There was the English officer and his bride, people verging towards middle age. I noticed that whenever we talked the officer listened to us. He did not seem to, for he kept his smiling eyes on his wife, and appeared to be absorbed in her. A certain glaze across his eyes, however, told me that his attention was not with her. Eleanor, to whom news flew like homing birds, discovered that he was somehow concerned with the British intelligence service, and was supposed to be a masterhand at ferreting out spies.

There was the tall handsome French officer with his mother. His days of soldiering were over, for he had lost a leg. How that mother's face told her feelings! Sometimes, when a woman in black entered the dining-room, she would look at her son with a world of gratitude in her eyes. He was alive; mutilated, but alive. Again, when he had difficulty in rising from the table, or when, in his slow progress on crutches, he slipped on the

polished floor, her face showed her grief, that the lot of war had marred the strength and ability of this man, made, it would almost seem, by nature, to show how beautiful could be her human handiwork.

There was the Russian aviator, and his *marraine.* She was a woman of perhaps sixty, who had been beautiful, a woman whose face showed that she had had much experience and was still avid of life. She used some of her great wealth in taking wounded soldiers to stay with her during their period of convalescence. She and the aviator seemed never to run out of subjects of conversation. There was the Russian nurse, who had picked up patients under fire. There was the quiet French civilian about whom even Eleanor heard nothing; he looked strong, — could he be a slacker, an *embusqué?* There were the two American expatriates who were giving all their time and money to ambulance work. There were various American women working in *ouvroirs.* There were American ambulance boys who came in for an occasional meal. One of them had earned a *croix de guerre* for acting as a stretcher-bearer under fire.

"Why don't you wear it?" a woman asked him.

He glanced over at Henri, the *concierge,* laboriously sorting mail with mutilated hand. His frank young face grew red, and he said, bluntly,

"Wear it in the face of that man there? Wear

it, when I 've seen French soldiers who had given their lives or their best blood and never had a medal! Wear it, when I 've walked down the Champs Elysées beside a hero with both eyes and both hands gone. I — I 'd be ashamed."

" That 's the right sort of spirit," I heard an American behind me say. " There are too many Americans in Paris, secretly hoping for a decoration, or else openly working for it. When we 're saving our skins, and letting the Allies do our bit, we ought to give all we can and ask for nothing. There are too many girls who come over here to help France, and who expect to go joy-riding through the war zone."

That remark rankled. The Americans I had seen, with perhaps one or two exceptions, had struck me as disinterested people. There were the women in the American Fund for French Wounded, who had all made sacrifices to give their services to France: Mrs. Benjamin Lathrop, Miss Perkins, Miss Vail, Mrs. Wilson, Miss D'Este; many others. There was Doctor Watson, rector of the American church, and his wife, who worked early and late for the poor of Paris and of the devastated region, with no thought of self. There was Caroline Levy, so used to physical comfort, who for months had got up at six to do menial work in a hospital, and who had taken her seventeen-year-old boy out of college to drive an ambulance, both of them offering inconspicuous unremitting service. There were workers in

ouvroirs whose subordinate positions would preclude any chance of decorations, who could not possibly have anything to gain. Surely our service was for the most part unmarred by egotism!

I hoped the French people thought we were disinterested. On all sides I heard grateful remarks about America from French soldiers and civilians. All along I had felt that we Americans should be in the war with more than our money. I wondered what the French really thought of us and our attitude. I knew what the English thought. I had begun to find it out one night in London in a music hall, when from the stage had come some reference to the United States, and from the gallery had come a sneering, jeering chorus,

"Too proud to fight!"

I had felt, on the part of my British friends, an attitude something like this: "We don't think you're very important as a military force. Really, we don't need you or want you, — but why don't you come in?"

And finally I had the average British soldier's attitude put to me by a young Canadian officer as follows:

"The United States seems to think this war is a private European war with which they have nothing to do. They have not assumed that the cause of the Allies is the cause of civilization. They have not granted that the ultimate defeat of the Allies would prove injurious to themselves. They object to the English regulation which in-

conveniences their commerce, — almost seeming to look at this in the same light as at Germany's outrageous disregard of international law. Yet they rake in money for the high-priced munitions they sell us, — often of poor quality, as I have reason to know. A 'Yank' shell, exploding before its time, has killed men fairly at my feet. We resent it that your country is 'too proud to fight,' because that means that we have to fight for her."

I wanted very much to know what the French really thought of us, and in the days while I was waiting to go to the war zone I tried to find out. I 'm not sure that I ever really did. But the nearest I came to it was in a talk I had one day at Le Bourget with Jules Mercier. Le Bourget, some fifteen miles outside Paris, is a place where soldiers entrain for the front. At one end of the long, long platform is a little canteen where an American girl, once a schoolteacher, gives the soldiers hot coffee and hot soup. Nor do her ministrations end there. I have seen her stop a limping soldier, take off his sock and find that his foot was infected. There was no superior officer present who could give him permission to go to the hospital outside Le Bourget, and she dressed the foot herself, her lips quivering. I have seen her talking to men of their homes, of their children, of the little farms where they were reared. She never failed to give comfort, — and she never failed to take away another scar for her own ten-

der heart. Just an inconspicuous woman, but there are hundreds of the men who have streamed down the long platform of Le Bourget who have risen up to call her blessed.

On the Sunday I met Jules Mercier I went with two officials of the American Fund for French Wounded to give cigarettes to the soldiers. Such a joy it is to offer good American tobacco to the French soldiers. The poilu's eyes glisten as he looks at the extended box; but he takes only one cigarette. You have to press several upon him; never have I known a French soldier to give way to his real desires in the matter of our tobacco. Down the long platform they surged in billows of horizon-blue for the French soldiers, of red for the Turcos and of mustard-brown for the Moroccans and Tunisians. A gay billowing it was, and sweeping along on the crest of a wave of horizon-blue was little Jules Mercier.

I am certain I never met Jules before, though he is " almost certain, — but, yes, madame, quite certain " that he saw me once in the restaurant near Fifth Avenue, up in the Forties, where he used to be a waiter. Jules had gone to America at fourteen; had prospered, financially, but had met with a misadventure in love at about the time the war broke out. The land of his birth, a sense of adventure, and a wish to lose sight of his personal disappointment — all had conspired to call him back to France.

Jules and I walked up and down the long plat-

form, and talked and became friends. I ventured to ask him about the girl who had jilted him in New York. He thumped his narrow chest.

"Here," he said, "it is here I have her letter that she wrote when she found I was in the trenches. All full of endearments it is. I am her brave soldier! Heh! She will have a light in the window for me when I return! Heh! She lives up in the Broneex, and me, I think an electric bulb in the window there for me will be foony. She wants my picture, yes, to put a flower before!"

Jules thumped the letter again, and added, reflectively,

"I do not think my wife would like me to carry that letter if she knew. But I carry it out of scorn, yes!"

"Oh," I gasped, "so you are married?"

"Ah, but yes! the nicest little wife, the nicest little baby, too. She 's fit to be a soldier's wife, this one. Not like the other, no. She is French-American, too; she thought the United States ought to help in this war, and when it did n't she came herself. Ah, yes, she could not be a soldier, but she could work in the munitions. She could give the work of one soldier."

Jules showed me the picture of his wife and baby. Then I said,

"Tell me, Jules, what do the French really think of us?"

The inscrutable expression with which I was already familiar veiled Jules's eyes, and he began

to speak words of graceful gratitude with which I was also familiar. But after a time I convinced Jules that he could be frank.

"I will tell you a little incident that happened the other day, madame, in a little town back of the line where I was billeted. I had occasion to seek my lieutenant in a *brasserie*. He sat there with a British officer. Yes. As I stand, and they sit, an ambulance passes the window. It is the gift of a very rich lady in New York. On the side of the ambulance is painted in big letters that it is her gift. And my lieutenant says to the British officer,

"'That 's America.'

"And the British officer answers,

"'That 's America, advertising; saying, 'Look at me!'"

"So, madame, perhaps the French think the Americans point to themselves very much. And I know that the soldiers in the trenches wonder at the United States. They are grateful for the gifts of the ladies. They bless the ambulance that takes them hastily to the hospital. But they say to me,

"'Jules, you have lived there. You tell us. Why do not the Americans come to fight? We are fighting for principles that they understand. We gave them help!'

"What am I to say, madame? It is of no use to remind my friends that those French soldiers of the Revolutionary War were paid, were, in a

sense, mercenaries. Madame knows that money never pays the soldier or his family for the life he gives. I have no explanation for my friends.

" When an American comes to drive an ambulance our soldiers look at him and wonder why he is not in the trenches. When an American enlists in the foreign legion, to him in our hearts we say ' brother ' and we would give our lives to save his.

" Does madame understand? France is grateful, — but proud. She will ask for no more than she receives. She would be glad to need nothing. And so it is wise for the Americans to give tactfully, not to wish to manage for France in the brisk American fashion. It is better, perhaps, for France to manage in her own way, — even to make her mistakes in her own way, as America does.

" But there is a little feeling, — it is the feeling that we soldiers have for our rich civilians. We see them driving in their fine motor cars that splash the mud on our uniforms that we have cleaned so carefully to look neat on our '*permissions*.' We scowl at them and wonder if they have made their profits through the war, and if they have sons at the front or if their sons are slackers, *embusqués*. But if we find out afterwards that their sons are not in safe service, but are in the trenches, then again we say in our hearts ' Brother.' So we shall feel when the Americans are in the war. Any misunderstanding will have gone. We shall love them as we do the British. Does madame understand? "

I thought I did, and I strove very hard to reassure Jules, who had suddenly repented his frankness, was fearful he had not been quite "*gentil.*" But presently he was telling me about the little home in Barcy, near Meaux, where his wife and child live with her mother, and he was whispering that he had been all over the battlefield of the Marne, which is to be reached from Meaux, and that he did not regard that battle as so difficult as his own experiences upon the Somme.

The groups on the platform grew thinner. By twos and threes the soldiers had gone into the third-class carriages. I bade Jules good-bye, told him that before we met again the United States would be in the war. More cigarettes to the men and little gay flags, which they took, laughing. The train began to move. The brave fellows leaned from the windows, cheering, waving. Here and there a man sat, immobile, his face blank, his eyes glazed. Perhaps he saw the home he had just left; or perhaps he was looking ahead to that future of the trenches which he knew so well, which might be his last sight in this world.

The train moved more quickly. The men hung out of the windows; some of them cried "*Vive l'Amérique!*" Others began to sing the *Marseillaise.* We Americans waved, and cried "*Vive la France,*" "*Bon chance,*" "*Au 'voir.*" Our tears made their figures turn into a swimming blue cloud, growing more and more dim as the train quickened its speed.

Somehow, as we drove back through the gray streets of Paris, I was content to wait for the war zone as long as the French authorities desired. What did it matter if they furnished me with hope that could never be fulfilled? What if no American writers ever saw the trenches! Those thousands of men in blue that massed themselves up into a living wall of flesh and blood against the Germans would somehow be translated into knowledge for the world if nobody ever wrote a line.

"*Vive la France,*" we who love her are always saying in our hearts. She would live without her friends, and she will live in spite of her enemies.

CHAPTER VI

The First Stretch of the War Zone

So the days of waiting went on. One night when Eleanor came back from her hospital, rather pale because of what she had seen that day of bravery and pain, I showed her triumphantly a permit.

"For Soissons!" I said.

"Not Soissons!" she cried. "It's bombarded daily. It's full of spies. It's bound to be the centre of a big attack soon. The cavalry have gone there —"

"Nevertheless," I said, triumphantly, "I've just come from the Maison de la Presse, where they summoned me to give me this permit. I met the officer who is to conduct us. He's the only Frenchman with imperfect manners I have ever seen. He showed that he didn't want us, and didn't see why we were allowed to go to Soissons. To-morrow morning we depart. Think of it! Soissons!"

Throughout dinner I glowed. I could see that wide road to Soissons along which we should drive! I could see the cavalry, — not as they are now, just men in blue, acting as infantry in the trenches, running down sometimes to exercise their horses which are kept two miles behind

the lines. Rather, I saw them as they were when they first rode out from Paris in August, 1914, in the moonlight. Magnificent riders, in their red uniforms and white mantles, their sabres flashing, their golden helmets gleaming, the long tails of horse hair which hung from them swinging wide as the horses galloped. That was the way they rode when France knew the glory of war, — but not yet this long grinding pressure.

"I can't believe it!" Eleanor kept murmuring.

It was just as well she did not, because at ten o'clock, after I had been warning the night watchman to be sure to call me in time, I had a regretful telegram advising me that the trip to Soissons had been indefinitely postponed. It was postponed so far that I have not yet gone! For me it may be a case of "I never shall see Carcasson."

I knew, and I was to know, further, that plans to go to the war zone must be subject to instant change. More than once I was promised trips to Verdun, to Soissons, to Compiègne, to Nancy, to Alsace, to Lorraine, and then the plans would be cancelled or changed. It was my good fortune to go, and to go repeatedly to the war zone, but I never felt sure I had really started until my train was well out of the Gare du Nord. Even then I knew that it was always possible to be turned back if a bombardment were assailing the city or the trenches for which I was bound. There came, however, an early morning when I drove through

the night-blue canyons of the Paris streets; saw the crepuscular blue dawn of the Gare du Nord, lighted by the countless crimson stars which were the glowing cigarettes of the soldiers, bought my ticket and boarded a train crowded with officers going back to the front. From my window I could see one of them pacing up and down the platform, his wife at his side. The wives of the private soldiers are not allowed on the platform. They wait in the station outside, until a brave cheering and whistling warns them that their men have once more gone out to face the unknown.

We travelled many miles before we reached the war zone proper. Yet signs of the business of war met us almost immediately. A little beyond the city, and one can see proofs that no matter what bad luck the French may have in war it will take the Germans a long time to get to Paris. Preparations for defence are not visible about the city itself; the city gates, once barricaded, are now open for traffic at any hour; the barbed-wire entanglements and the trenches across the roadway have been removed. But such defences have only withdrawn a little way. In whatever direction from the city one travels, one sees lines of stakes running across the fields, and between these are wound countless strands of barbed wire. Flanking these are deep, narrow trenches. Circle after circle of such defences spell to the possible invader a determined contest for every foot of the soil near Paris.

FIRST STRETCH OF WAR ZONE

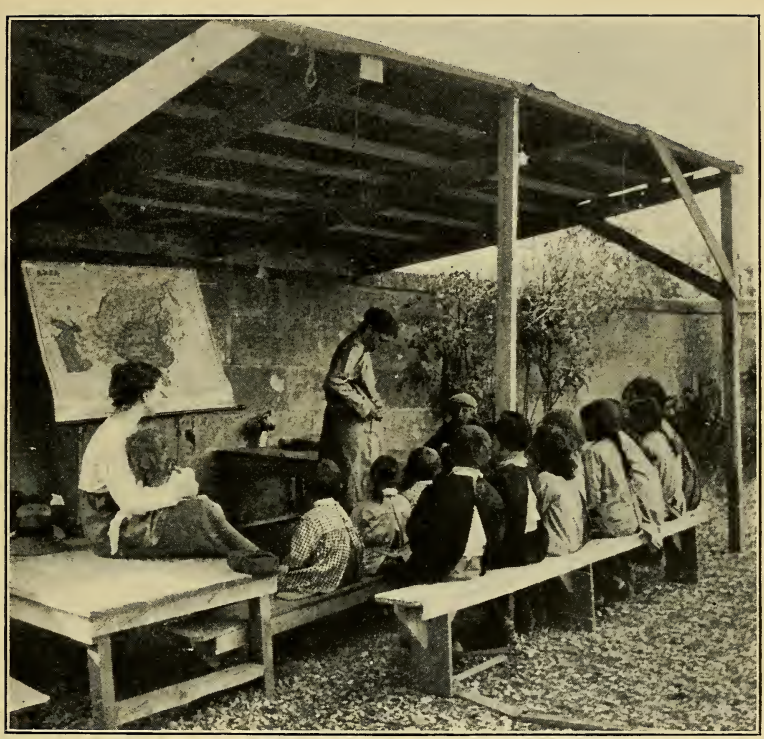
Signs of war everywhere: sentries on guard at bridges, soldiers getting in or out every time our train stopped. Other trains went with us, — freight cars on which the fate of France depends, each marked for eight horses or forty men, always carrying soldiers only. Invariably these were grouped in the wide doors, placed as if for a photograph, but without the self-consciousness of people sitting before a camera. They were too much interested in us, as a break in the monotony of their lives, and they gazed at us intently and amiably. Sometimes they wore horizon-blue; sometimes the mustard-colored uniforms of the Colonials from Tunis or Morocco. Sometimes a melancholy Arabian face would gaze down at us; again a knot of black, big, smiling Cingalese.

Other freight cars went by loaded with entrenching tools, with stakes and logs for trench repairing, with kitchens, and occasionally with the little two- and four-wheeled carts used in certain sectors for carrying the wounded from the first dressing station to the ambulances. Once we stopped beside a train flanked by two engines, its duty to carry up to the front three of the largest size cannon. They were painted with the usual *camouflage* in green and brown.

And yet, for all these symbols of the business of war, there was a sort of inalienable look of peace over the valley of the Marne. Women or men were ploughing; fields, which were untilled for lack of labor, looked at rest rather than

neglected. Flocks of crows made black blots against the brown earth as they garnered their harvest. High up in the air were two silver aeroplanes, looking no larger nor more dangerous than their little brothers, the crows. On the low hills lay narrow strips of crops, lovely in their softness and color. There is an unmistakably "foreign" look to an American about those gracious hills of the Marne. Perhaps it comes from the economy of trees, perhaps from a certain soft indecision of color. Here and there, at their feet, were little clean villages with brownish-red roofs. They seemed so placid that it was impossible to believe that the Germans had marched through them, had left scars upon them. Somewhere, in the background over yonder lived the Lecontiers, — or did they? — the Lecontiers who had become for me the symbol of all the suffering people of France. All that grief in the background, and, on the surface, serenity. There would be a sudden flashing view of a white villa with a green garden, down which ran a laughing child; of a stream in which a man and boy were fishing.

I was being "personally conducted" by an official of the Maison de la Presse, Madame St. Marie Perrin, to several of the base hospitals. This meant seeing soldiers so freshly come from trenches that in their ears were still the sounds of the attack, before their eyes blasting sights. They can give the civilian a feeling about warfare that the soldier in Paris or in England cannot. For,



An open-air school for French war-orphans

mercifully, the farther the soldier travels from the trenches, the dimmer are the pictures in his mind. If he could not forget out of the trenches, and if he could not dull himself in the trenches, he could not go on fighting. Even in the base hospital he voluntarily and energetically begins to forget, giving himself up to his clean white bed, ministered to by women who tend him like a child, but worship him as a hero. Even a man in civil life would know that that is an ideal combination.

A base hospital is by no means a sad sight. The men do not look sick. Indeed, they are not sick, they are wounded. And often they are glad to be wounded. Their eyes show it, — and they show more than that. The eyes of the French wounded may be infinitely weary, or dulled with pain, but in their depths is always a glint of spiritual light. Even very young boys have it; perhaps it is because, ever since the seventies, France has known that she must fight again for her life, and every man-child has been born, it may be, with a subconscious willingness to pay his country's price. Perhaps it is because there is something purifying in having paid blood and pain for a cause outside oneself. Perhaps it is because France, the martyr, has found herself as never before, and each of her men has won some dower of the soul.

Sometimes when the tortured nerves are quiet, and pain has given place to something higher, the spiritual gleam glows, and on the soldier's face is a light like a prayer. Only sometimes, — for

even France cannot be forever on a high level; — the flooding light dies down to a glint again. Idealization goes, and the soldier is just a suffering body, getting healed to go back to the front to be wounded once more. But the glint is there; it is symbolic of the self-sacrifice of France, and while it endures France cannot die.

It was a hospital in Epernay that we visited first. The neat office of the head doctor, a polite French welcome, many stairs to climb, and then entrance into our first ward. A long, long ward it was, with beds along two sides of the wall, most of them occupied. Above each man's bed was pinned his medals, if he had any, and pictures of his wife and children, or his mother or fiancée. On or beside the unoccupied beds sat men in the dark blue uniform of the convalescent.

As we entered, those men rose, stood to attention and saluted. And my blood boiled, because all the time we were in the ward they stood. That they must always do when a doctor enters. And why? Surely they have earned the right, have bought it with their blood, to sit in convalescence, or lounge in the presence of a doctor who, whatever his devotion, has not had to give his own blood for France. The doctors who have been selected for the dangerous positions in the trenches work furiously, after attacks and bombardments, and nobody stops to salute them.

There was a hospital I used often to visit in

Lewisham, because of the many English soldiers I knew in a certain ward who had been wounded on the Somme. The head nurse or sister of the ward was one of the best women I have ever known. If she had a fault I never saw it. She was the perfection of self-sacrifice and devotion. And yet she would begin to wake her soldiers as early as four o'clock in the morning to wash their faces and comb their hair, so that they could show the respect of perfect cleanliness to the doctor when he arrived in the neighborhood of nine o'clock. When they went over the top to help save the skin of the doctors safe in England they did n't stop to wash their faces!

The sick French soldiers in the ward went on standing, and my blood went on boiling. We walked down between the rows of beds. Each one had a clean white cover hanging down over the foot-board of the bed. Why, I have never learned. I would rather have seen "aeroplanes," as the soldiers call the supports on which rest wounded arms and legs. But the covers did add an effect of spotlessness to the already clean ward. Perhaps it was a typical Gallic touch.

And then I saw Pierre, lying very still and smiling, true soldier of France that he was. Once he must have been a very handsome man; now he was a *mutilé:* one eye gone, one leg and one arm. Over his bed, beside the pictures of a stout, smiling woman and three little boys, hung two medals, his *croix de guerre* and his military medal. I had

already learned that it is a rare soldier who cares to tell what form his bravery took. But the nurse told me that he had got the *croix de guerre* for carrying under fire much-needed ammunition; of a party of ten he alone had lived. The military medal was for his mutilations, suffered after he had led a bombing party into a German trench.

But if Pierre would not talk of his deeds he was eager to talk of the home to which he was soon to return.

"As madame sees," he said, "I am cracked. But I have saved something of myself to take back to my little children."

He told me their names and ages, and described the farm where they lived, and which he and his three brothers had tilled. I asked how it had fared with his brothers. It is the kind of question one asks without hope.

"One was killed on the Marne, madame; one is missing at Verdun; one lost his eyes and his right arm at the Somme." Then he added, almost as if he were offering comfort,

"I can give the three of them back to France through my three little boys."

The White Flame of France!

I moved away. I had to find quickly something I could smile at. I think Pierre understood this, because he turned to a man in the next bed and said,

"Eh, old *embusqué,* here you are at your old cowardly tricks!"

The man on the next bed had been carried, just an hour before, out of "Pictures." Doubtless "pictures" is not a fair translation of what the French soldiers call their operating theatre. The English call it "Pictures" because of what the soldier sees and hears as he is going under ether. The word is just one more sign of the brave way soldiers accept physical pain. The poilu to whom Pierre spoke had forty wounds from shrapnel. The doctors, through operation after operation, were trying to make his flesh sound again.

The "*embusqué*" smiled faintly, as one who has received a compliment, and I tried to smile too. "*Embusqué*," or slacker, may be the most insulting or the most complimentary word in the language. When one soldier says it to another who has been hurt it is a term of endearment. The speaker does n't even have to smile as he says it. But far away from hospitals and trenches it is the deadliest sort of offence. "*Cochon*" I believe used to be the forbidden word; but to call a man a pig as against calling him an *embusqué* would be to praise him.

The guests of the first hotel at which Eleanor and I stayed in Paris had a concrete instance of that. One night the late diners heard a shrieking clamor in the kitchen. There was a rush for the door. Perhaps it might be a spy who should be taken! There in the midst of the kitchen the chef and the head waiter were fighting with knives,

their blood dripping over the already soiled floor. The head waiter had called the chef an *embusqué*, and as the chef had been rejected by the military authorities because of his physical disabilities, he was avenging his honor in the head waiter's gore.

The weak soldier, then, smiled as if Pierre had praised him, and I tried to smile, but I was not really amused until my eye fell on Georges. There he lay, bald and middle-aged, — and twirling his moustache with intensity and with intention. Then I remembered what I had learned in my surreptitious childhood reading of fiction, that when the lady-killer entered he always twirled his moustaches. It was as sure a sign as that the blondness of the heroine was virtue, the darkness of the adventuress was wickedness, and that the handsome face and poverty of the hero meant he 'd get, in the last chapter, everything there was to have.

Georges twirled and twirled and grew more and more ridiculous. He was too absurd in his rôle of lady-killer, so obviously cast in the wrong part. It was n't because he was bald; I rather like bald men; I never knew one who was n't attractive. His fatness did n't matter; I like fat people. It was perhaps because he was naïve *and* bald *and* fat and too eager. He had the effect of a plump, simple, little boy, playing at a grown-up game he did n't understand, but thought very masculine and a bit naughty.

Of course we rallied about the bed of Georges,

and praised him and petted him and admired the garish rings he wore. He had made them himself out of the aluminum from the nose of the German shell that had wounded him. In each was a bit of the glass which had fallen from the stained great window of the cathedral of Rheims. Four of them, all small ones, fitting on his little fingers, had the glass set in a heart shape.

"Those," said Georges, "are for my fiancées. Until I have made up my mind, I shall not show one more consideration than I do another. That is fair, is it not, madame?"

That was a hard question for a feminist to answer, but Georges did not want an answer.

"One of them is in the invaded district. That finishes her for me. No girl for me who has lived in the same town with Germans. But I should like her to have the ring for sentiment. The other three, — but I do not know. One of them gets good wages in a munition factory. Another, — my faith! — she is getting rich because she has a little grocery shop in a village where English soldiers are billeted. But she is not so amiable as the first. The third, if her brother should be killed in the war, she will have all to herself a good farm. Madame sees the difficulties."

"Ah, but a soldier like you," madame said, "should not have much difficulty in being true to all three, — especially at long range in a hospital."

Georges took this as a compliment.

"True, madame," he beamed, "and then there

is always the chance of meeting someone else. I can always make another ring. Time settles these things for the soldier."

Every soldier we saw was worth lingering with: the tall Arab in his white burnoose, who feared the cold and longed to go home; the little seventeen-year-old boy who, too young to be called, had enlisted. He had the Cross of War for having held, with bombs, a bit of trench against twenty advancing Germans. He had killed them all, — that little boy who looked young enough still to be tubbed by his mother on Saturday nights. There was the group of handsome officers at lunch in their private dining room. Gentles and simples, they were all soldiers who bore scars for France.

On that three days' tour we saw many hospitals; there was the field ambulance at St. Menehould, put temporarily in a moving-picture palace. It had wounded men and tubercular men. The rule was that the windows of the wards must be kept open because of the tubercular men. So the wounded men in bed shivered under a keen wind, while down stairs in the sealed-up reception rooms, the tubercular men huddled about stoves entirely free from any current of air. About the only thing French soldiers seem afraid of is fresh air in a sleeping or living room. We had an impression of gloom at St. Menehould, perhaps because of the great shells that, just before our arrival, had rained down on the part of the town near the

railway; perhaps because of the sound of the German guns, for St. Menehould is not many miles from the German lines.

There were the hospitals at Châlons, at Revigny, at Compiègne, and at Bar-le-Duc. The one at Bar-le-Duc is the largest. It lies opposite the railway station, and a train is ready to take the patients away in case of bombardment The effect of the hospital is impressive: a large central building, and on each side many long shed-like buildings, always filled with patients. When we entered the great yard, a number of soldiers were being mustered out of the hospital by an officer. He would call a name; a soldier would reply, and with that reply he was free to go. Free to go home, to finish his convalescence with those who loved him. To these men we said "*Bon chance*" with joy, and they answered us with joy. It made the spirit soar to see their happiness. I suppose they would not know another moment so happy, except when each opened the door of his own house.

We visited the long wooden structures. Here were wounded men and sick men: ill with typhoid fever, with jaundice, with tuberculosis, with rheumatism, with any ills that may make a soldier unfit to protect France in the trenches.

One soldier, crippled with rheumatism, to whom I talked, had a curious manner of finality in his replies, as if he expected me to pass on and leave him in peace. So I asked him if I were tiring him. His lips curved in a sad, half cynical smile.

"But, no," he said; "I supposed that I could not interest madame, that she would pass on quickly, as other visitors do who are not relatives. You see, madame, there is nothing romantic about me. I have no wound!"

An English soldier I had met had talked in much the same fashion.

"A pretty girl of the 'smooth-the-sick-brow' type," he had said, "won't look at you if you have taken pneumonia or rheumatism. If you 've only got a bullet in you she 'll tolerate you, but she won't really accept you unless you are riddled with shell."

"We were ready to take wounds," the French soldier resumed. "We suffered, we *malades,* the bombardments, the misery of cold and suspense, we went through the attacks. We gave all we had to France. It was only chance that spared me the wound. I wish it had not. For with a wound I would have had a pension. Now I shall have no pension, and always I shall be a cripple."

It is true. France does not give her "*malades*" a pension; nor even the mutilated men, unless they are totally incapacitated. More than that, after six months these soldiers, released from military service, must yield up their uniforms. There are private organizations which try to teach them trades, or to find them work in keeping with their depleted abilities. Even so, the price these men have paid to France is heavy. One of the saddest sights I saw in Paris was a sort of lottery of old

clothes, where these *réformé* soldiers paid a franc each, and drew something in the way of garments. There they stood in line, poor, thin, ill-clad heroes, and if they found their prizes were not what they wanted, they looked about eagerly for someone who might be willing to exchange.

It was at Bar-le-Duc that I first talked with the Cingalese soldiers. There must have been fifty of them in the ward, — big, black, beaming creatures, mostly sitting on their beds or leaning against the walls, looking at us with friendly, curious eyes. One of them held the Cingalese flag, — red, with a green hand in the centre. Their nurse, a pretty blonde woman, spoke of them in terms of deepest affection.

"I 'd rather nurse them than any other soldiers," she said; "they are so docile, so good about obeying rules, so affectionate. They call me 'Mama' or else 'Mama Cingalese.' I love them."

This sorted ill with the stories I had heard from French officers about the Cingalese. But as I looked at them they did appear gentle. I believed her and not the officers. I spoke to one of them, — a big, ugly creature, sitting cross-legged on the bed, grinning, looking like an amiable ape.

"It is n't possible that you have killed Germans?" I said to him.

He bounded on the floor, his face like a devil's. He seized a broom, and he made me see with dreadful realistic motions how he cut off the heads

of the Germans. I have never seen on a stage anything more vivid.

"When they say 'Kamerad' to me," he yelled, "I say 'No Kamerad,' and I thrust them through the middle, and put my foot on them to drag out my bayonet."

Then he crawled on his bed, once more an amiable ape. Thereafter I was constrained to believe both the officers and the nurses. The officers say that the Cingalese cannot endure a bombardment; therefore, they are not taken into the trenches until a few hours before an attack. For the attack they are put in the front line, and they go bounding over No Man's Land, their bayonets fixed, shouting. Sometimes, though against orders, they carry an open knife in their teeth. They terrify the Germans. They embarrass their officers, for they go beyond the territory marked out for the advance, and they can't stop when the fighting is done.

When I repeated this to the nurse she nodded.

"I 'll have to confess," she said, "that my first encounter with the Cingalese was horrifying. I had charge of a tiny ward containing two wounded Cingalese and two wounded Germans. I had orders not to leave the ward, but during the night some serious emergency occurred in the adjoining ward, and I was called to help. When I returned I found that one of my wounded Cingalese had crawled out of bed and killed the two Germans."

Logical people, the Cingalese. To them an

enemy is an enemy, and they don't understand when the game changes.

Of all the hospitals I saw I liked best that of Doctor and Mrs. Alexis Carrel at Compiègne and that of Mrs. Julia Depew at the Château d'Annel. For one thing, I was not personally conducted when I saw them. I had the almost unheard-of privilege, for a writer, of wandering by myself in that particular region of the Aisne. A writer naturally does not want to travel by rule; frequently it is n't in the wide roads marked out for him, but in the by-paths of his own discovering that he finds the highest significance. The work of Doctor Carrel is well known in America; his use of Dakin's solution for washing out the wounds every two hours and his mathematical prophecies of his cures have often been written about in our periodicals. What he has done for head wounds and for fractures is invaluable. His hospital, until the latest push, was so close to the lines that he often received soldiers two hours after they were wounded. In such cases his cures were prompt. Hundreds of soldiers owe their limbs or their lives to his work and that of his wife. The United States may be proud of the help it has been able to give France through this hospital, and also through that of Mrs. Depew.

Hers is not so well known. It was even nearer the German lines than the Carrel hospital. I realized that when I followed Mrs. Depew from ward to ward with a gas mask over my arm. There

is something about the serene white-winged Château d'Annel rising from its deep green background that touches the imagination. A beautiful home it was, surrounded by some seven hundred acres of land, set in the midst of hunting country; a place for pleasure, for leisure. Now it is a house of suffering and of mercy. Magnificent music-room and ball-room, library and reception rooms, — all are turned into wards. On the wide lawn are built wooden barracks for more beds; in a far corner of the garden is a soldier's graveyard with one hundred crosses, and beyond are trenches, dug in case Annel should ever again be attacked by the Germans. Most characteristic fact of all: from the beginning the American flag has flown there, on this nearest of all private hospitals to the trenches. Time and again the German Taubes have passed over it, have seen that flag and the Red Cross emblem, and have not shelled it. The château was captured, but a German officer who knew Mrs. Depew's uncle, Senator Depew, protected it. While they had it, three English soldiers, wounded in the retreat from Mons, crawled in and were secretly cared for by the old *concierge*. They were there when the Germans withdrew and when Mrs. Depew and her staff came back. As I went through ward after ward I built up the story of Annel. Mrs. Depew organized the hospital herself, established an office at the Hotel Creon in Paris, where supplies could be sent her by friends, and so far has furnished practi-

cally all the money herself. She organized the diet kitchen; supervised it; when necessary she cooked and nursed herself; on one occasion she decorated some soldiers with the Cross of War, when the officers who were to do it were called suddenly to the front. She told me, with tears, of a man she was to have decorated, but the officer came back in time. The man was dying. He had strength only to touch his officer's hand and say,

" Thank you, my captain. I have done my best. *Au 'voir. Vive la France!* "

They die as gallantly as they charge, these soldiers of France. There was no hospital I visited on that tour, or later, that did not serve as a human monument to bravery and patience. Despite the suffering and the percentage of men whom no care of nurses and doctors can save, the hospitals teach one to hope. As I left Annel that evening I met soldiers marching up to the trenches, and it was good to know that, if they must be cast into the red gulf of war and suffer wounds, at least soft, clean beds would receive them, and they would be nursed by tender women who would not think of them as " casualties " nor in terms of statistics, but as broken men, whom other women had borne with pain, and who must be reborn again for their most ancient mother, France.

CHAPTER VII

The Wide Plantations of the Dead

The sound of the guns was in my ears that morning. A bombardment is a curious accompaniment to a civilian's daily living. Sometimes it is so far away that it affects one subconsciously, like a paper crackling at midnight when one is half asleep. Again, it may thrust itself in the foreground of one's experience menacingly. A bombardment that I shall never forget I saw and heard in Compiègne. I had spent the morning far away from all signs of war, walking in the wonderful forest of Compiègne, than which there is no more beautiful wood in the world. I had a sense of rich peace. When I reached the château where Napoleon brought his second wife, Marie Louise, I felt quite like a pre-war tourist as I wandered through the spacious grounds looking at the statues of lovely, mild ladies, reflective or defiant men and fierce lions. On the door the emperor had his initial carved on three stone panels, — which is perhaps what an upstart conqueror would do. In front of the château is a great vista between the trees of the park. Napoleon is said to have had it cut over night to please Marie Louise, which is what a lover would do, — or a politic emperor.

While I was looking at all these signs of power and glory I heard the shattering report of a gun. First came a deep double "woof"; then a sharp echo; then a long sighing sound. People in the square opposite the château paused and glanced in the direction of a hill some quarter of a mile away. Ten minutes later I was on the roof of my hotel, looking across the valley at that hill. Upon it would come, one after another, long tongues of yellow flame, and then the deep barking of the guns. They were of different calibre, judging from the sounds, but they were all loud, and all nerve-racking.

The bombardment was directed against the town of Roye. For three hours it continued. I am not a screaming person, but after fifteen minutes of that bombardment I could understand why people want to scream. I thought of those poor French civilians in Roye, cowering in their cellars, bombarded, of necessity, by the shells from their own friends. I did not wonder at stories I had heard of soldiers who, under bombardment, run up and down the trenches, striking their heads against the walls. What a test for nerves! To lie, perhaps as closely crowded together as lead soldiers in a box, wondering how much longer the shelling will last, and when the attack will come! Surely nature allows a merciful insensibility, takes away fear, makes the soldier face the stark fact of shells with passive stoicism.

Again and again in the war zone, as I saw what

the soldiers endured, I felt a passionate admiration for common men. Many of them are without especial education or high ideals; just average people who want to stay at home. They have proved what nobility there is in human nature. In spite of the insanity and waste of the war, the men of all countries who die so grandly surely give the world the right to hope that after this war civilization will be a better thing than ever it was before; that on the broken lives of the soldiers and of their women and children we can build up a new and a better world for all the peoples.

But the sound of the guns as they came to me that morning when I first saw the battlefield of the Marne were so remote that they seemed only like the subdued and meaningless mutterings of thunder. I was at the Urgency Cases Hospital at Faux Miroir, some four miles from Verdun, staffed by English doctors, nurses and orderlies, for French soldiers who come mostly from Verdun, the Argonne and Les Eparges. They treat chiefly the most severe cases, and have a very large percentage of cures.

All over France châteaux have been turned into hospitals, their chapels made the operating theatre, humble barracks adding themselves, democratically, as need comes for more and yet more beds. But Faux Miroir has its special history. Indeed, history has very quickly crept over that region of the Marne, like quick-growing ivy. The cream-

colored château and the little high-shouldered cream-colored lodge were, at the time of the battle of the Marne, the headquarters of the German army. The crown prince lived in the lodge. The doctors showed me a grave almost directly opposite the front door of the château. It was that of a German officer who had been shot through the lungs. He had sat out on the porch of the château for three days, dying, looking across the lovely sloping country, hearing the guns, with who knows what thoughts flooding his mind. When he was dead the crown prince had come out of the high-shouldered red-roofed lodge and made a fiery speech, with himself in the foreground, and his country and his father's friend Herr Gott in the background. But it was the French who put a black cross up over the dead man's grave. Perhaps the Germans lacked the time for that; at any rate, they had to retreat so quickly that the French found six Germans drunk in the cellar, their heads pillowed on heaps of champagne bottles. As one of the orderlies put it, they were probably waiting to be waked about the time Von Kluck was to be eating his Christmas dinner in Paris.

There were many stories they told me of the German invaders and of the courage and sweetness of the French patients. After luncheon we took a walk across the fields. I did not understand what I was to see. I came upon it and its meaning suddenly. Simply, we were walking over

a lumpish meadow behind the château. In the distance was the shadowy bulwark of the Argonne woods. The field was about four acres in extent. It began at a road, quite shelterless, except for two tall trees, and it sloped up to a little tree-set ridge where we could dimly see what looked like ditches. Suddenly one of the doctors began to talk about the little French soldiers who had gone between those two trees, as through a gate, unsheltered, in the face of murderous machine-gun fire. How vivid his quiet words made the picture. The ditches on the tree-set ridge were trenches the Germans had dug, — some of the very few trenches used in the battle of the Marne. In each of them from two to six Germans knelt with a machine-gun. Raked by this relentless fire, the French soldiers had come on, their red trousers and caps making everyone of them a target. Some of them had never faced fire before. Doubtless none of them had fought in such a bare field. But they had not turned back, nor had they dropped to look for shelter behind any of the rough hummocks of the meadow. They dropped only when the German guns struck them down.

Step by step we followed the brave red route the French had chosen, — but we faltered at the sight of their graves. They had taken back their lands from the Germans, but at such cost! And his comrades had buried each dead man where he had fallen. There they slept, the ones who had gone farthest up the hill lying near the Ger-

man trenches. The same coverlid of withered grass lay over them and over the side of the trenches. The rusty tins from which the Germans had eaten their food had not been taken away. About each grave was built a fence made of four slim boughs, joined to each other at right angles. Across the side of this was placed some article of clothing of the soldier's, — his shirt or coat. Sometimes at the head of each grave was a cross made of two saplings nailed together. On one or two there had been an attempt to write in pencil the name and regiment of the soldier, but time had weathered the words away.

"Perhaps the graves ought to be better protected," said one of the doctors. "But there has been no time. It is of the living we have to think. These heroes will come into their own when the war is over. If all these graves were banked in flowers, from here to Meaux, along all the stretch of land where these men died, still they could not have meant more to France than they do."

Unknown soldiers of France, but never to be forgotten by the nation. There they lie without names, a part of that rough meadow which they died to win. In the springtime perhaps the plough will turn aside from their graves, and in summer the wheat will creep up against their enclosures, and red poppies will grow over their loyal hearts. In the winter the rain and the wind will dash over their rough covering. For them it was as good an ending as any man could have.

They had been in battle a month, those young men who died in the battle of the Marne, boys in the early twenties, most of them. They had known the glory of mobilization, — and then the dawning horror of what war really was. What a terrible initiation for each into a life so different from anything he had ever dreamed of! Who can tell what they suffered of humiliation, of hunger, of weariness, of wounds, as the Germans slowly pushed them back? Who knows what price they paid in that month? They must have died, poor boys, without knowing whether or not they died in vain. Was this forced retreat of theirs to be continued, even after help should come? Would France, in the end, see victory? Who knows what their thought was as they died the death, quick, or slow and painful, for France? They have paid their part of the price, — but the women who loved them have a long, long price yet to pay.

A wide plantation of the dead, that battlefield of the Marne, extending all the way from Verdun to Meaux. These thousands of graves, marking the French miles, these haphazard ranks of dead men seem as if they were still defending France. Themselves, through their stark, nameless little mounds, speak better than any oratory that will ever be uttered over them.

Usually civilians who are allowed to see the battlefield of the Marne go first to Meaux. We are told that it should really be called the battle-

field of the Ourcq. The Ourcq is a tributary of the Marne, and close to its waters, on a ridge a little way from the Soissons road, northeast of Vareddes, the Sixth French army attacked the flank of Von Kluck's first German army.

Perhaps it is not surprising that already at Meaux, at Revigny, at Gerbérvillers, and in various other cities that have been bombarded or devastated by the Germans, guides have sprung up who are willing to exhibit and explain the symbols of the French tragedy. Already they have their picture post cards and their souvenirs to sell; already at tongue's end little reels of sad stories, miraculous escapes, strange captures of spies, and ironic revenges.

The carriages that meet the Paris train at Meaux to-day are suggestive of what Meaux will be like when the real tourists come. At present the only cars in the zone are military cars; too many spies made use of cars in the early days. Meantime, the drivers of the carriages have a glorious freedom in fixing the tariff for a tour over the battlefield. But in return each is willing to tell his tale of flight at approach of the Germans, and of a quick return to help bury the dead. He is also willing to point out shops where souvenirs can be bought in the shape of objects made out of bits of shell. It is all a little reminiscent of our own Civil War battlefields. It seems a bit like a tale often told, not as if it were still alive, still a tragedy with the end not yet in sight.

Once on the road to Soissons this second-hand effect wears away. The atmosphere of the war zone comes back. A sentinel in blue steps into the middle of the road, his bayonet fixed. He examines the permits of everyone who tries to pass. Even the gray military motors must stop for the inspection of papers. The road winds above the top of the slope, and then down on the other side. There lies a mound, surrounded by a fence of barbed wire, and surmounted by a little standard bearing the star and crescent, — graves of the Moroccoans. No one knows how many of these men from Northern Africa lie there.

The driver points with his whip to a little black cross in a barbed-wire enclosure. It bears the little A for "*Allemand*," — a German grave.

"They burned most of their dead, the Germans," the driver says. "So we could n't discover what their losses were. Higher up we found a layer of ashes more than a foot thick. They 're ploughed under now."

Across the next ridge we see the marks of the battle in scarred and mutilated tree-trunks. The driver indicates the eastern ridge where the German batteries lay, and the western point where the French had their guns. He makes us see what the road looked like when the battle was done. The heaps of trees and earth could be cleared away, but never the graves along the roadside.

Vareddes, with its patched front doors; Etrépilly and the three battle monuments: and, be-

yond, a sea of white flags marking the many, many graves of the unknown men who died for France. They lie near Chambry, where the French Zouaves made, for five days, such a brave fight in the cemetery. They lie near the little village of Penchard, the spot nearest Paris which the Germans reached. In pastures, in grain fields, by the roadsides they sleep, in no order; just great drifts of graves, dug wherever the soldiers died. They form no conventional cemetery; here are no monuments, no head wreaths. Occasionally over the barbed-wire enclosure of a grave is suspended a glass bottle, containing the name and rank of the soldier. On some of the graves near Barcy lie small white bottles containing cards on which was printed this:

"Madame Parmentier, Paris, 10 Passage Saint Ambroise, would be grateful to anyone who could furnish her the very least information concerning her son, Auguste Maurice Parmentier, soldier of the 246th regiment of Infantry, 21st company, who fell at Barcy, September 6th, 1914."

I did not see all the long miles of the battlefield on the same day. It was on three separate days that the wide plantation was unrolled for me. And the sadness of it all would have been unbearable if, here and there, I had not come across instances of hope and happiness. Two episodes stand out especially in my memory. One was my meeting with Antoinette. She was striding along, skirting a field in which lay some of the unmarked

graves of the men of the Marne. But she was not looking at them. She was looking beyond them, and singing aloud as she went towards the railway station, carrying in her right hand a bundle, and in her left her precious permit that allowed her to go to Paris.

"*Me!*" she said. "I am going back. I was visiting my uncle in the north of France when pouf! of a sudden came the war, like a hot wind that no one is looking for. My father and my brother were mobilized; they are dead; and my mother died of grief. My fiancé went, but oh, madame, he is alive! alive! He is now a *réformé*. He has lost one arm and one eye, but what of that? We can keep a little shop just the same and be happy."

She began to cough heavily, terribly.

"It is nothing," she said; "it was lucky for me, that cough! The Germans said I must work in the fields. I said I would not; and they put me in prison for six months. Then I got ill and they sent me away. I am afraid I troubled them too much," she added, laughing.

"Last night, where I stayed," she went on happily, "there was such bright light — oh, all I wanted! Only in the big cities in Northern France do they have real light — gas, electricity. We in the little towns cannot afford candles at twenty cents. So we make little lamps out of bacon fat with a string in it. But perhaps the war will be over soon. Last night I thought that by the time

Henri and I have our shop the war must be over. Madame, say you think that some time peace will come back to France! "

We spoke a little longer and then she went on. I looked after Antoinette, walking to meet her happiness, and I knew that some day in France more than bravery and hope will flourish; love and happiness will come back, and not only to France, but to all the war-harmed world, for these are immortal.

The other episode was a drama in the dark. I heard only the voices of the two who spoke, felt their emotion. As the town in which I was staying overnight was so near the front, no light dared show. I was feeling my way down an utterly dark street. Nothing can be lonelier than to be in a strange town in the dark, uncertain where one is going.

I could hear subdued voices behind shuttered windows. Occasionally I could hear footsteps, a friendly and yet fearful sound, and I would wait till the pedestrian came up with me and would ask my way. Quiet streets, a black, star-sown sky, far-away voices, — somehow I felt, as never before, the mystery of life and the essential loneliness of every human soul.

The sidewalk ended abruptly upon turf, and I walked on blindly a few paces. Then I paused, afraid of the enveloping space, wanting the touch of a hand, the welcome of a voice. Dimly I made out a gray-black wall, with a black shadow against

it. As I hesitated, voices came from the shadows.

"Oh, Pierre, — is it that you love little ugly me!" whispered a girl's wondering joy-choked voice.

"Ah, my little Marie-Louise," replied a man's deep voice, "this war, it has made me! What was I? A careless, selfish, laughing boy, wanting the prettiest girl and the most of everything that came my way. But in the trenches, Marie-Louise, I have grown old in my heart and old in my head. Sitting out there I see what is good, what is bad. I am a man now, Marie-Louise, and I know the best, — you, and after the war, home and peace."

I felt my way back to the sidewalk and got to my destination by some other route. If there was anything sinister in the darkness it had gone. As long as love and faith and humility still exist in the world good will come even out of this war.

That little drama was in my mind the day I saw what was almost my most tragic sight in all France, — that poignant acre in Châlons. I had well-nigh forgotten my errand, in the beauty of that memory of the two lovers who had so miraculously found each other, — for it is always a miracle when two real lovers meet.

Then suddenly I remembered, for at a cross-roads we drew up sharply to let pass a funeral procession. How heavily it went by; first a little chorister bearing a cross, on which drooped a Christ, — strange symbol in this time of war; a Christ "whose sad face sees only this after the

passion of a thousand years." Then came the curé in his vestments, his old white face inalienably sad; next walked his assistant priest, and then came the hearse. It was a military wagon, drawn by mules, and on it lay two coffins covered with the French flag. Soldiers, then, and whose, besides their country's, it was not difficult to tell, for as close to them as she could walk came an old woman. She was a stout, plain old woman in black; her neck was wry, and as she went she shook her old head and heavy tears dropped down her cheeks. The grotesqueness only made her grief more terrible. She walked alone; among those who followed after there was no husband or daughter to help her bear her loss. What road in France is there that had not known such a procession?

And then we came to the soldiers' graveyard in Châlons-sur-Marne. It must have been a beautiful sward once, before it shouldered its freight of death. To the right, at the back, was a low green hill, and as we entered a little child in black ran down it, laughing. Nothing else seemed natural. At the right, on an elevation, were rows of officers' graves, separated each from the other by a foot or two of space, and beside them the gray stone wall bore several wreaths in honor of them and of the private soldiers. But these did not hold the eye; rather it sprang to the left, to the great glittering acres, close-set with crosses where the soldiers lay who had given their

lives to France in the battle of the Marne, — new, staring, abnormal, poignant acres!

For a graveyard should be softened, mellow, a place of growth, where old sorrows are healing as new sorrows enter. The old, the middle-aged, and the young should lie here side by side, even as in life they savor together the daily taste and color of this our world. Families should lie together; there should be, as in life, a sense of progress; the sense that death, however remorseless, preserves its rhythms and cycles, deserves, too, acceptance.

But the graveyard of Châlons, — it holds no old men, no children, no married couples, no women. There are only hundreds upon hundreds of young men, all blotted together, in the course of a few days, from the world of life. These beautiful young men, still in their dreams loving France, but wanting this world, too; and now they lie in stark ranks, with all their dear human future forever unfulfilled.

The wide surface that covers them is flat; their levelled graves are set as close together as may be. Gay flowers are planted at their feet, and at the head of each is a wooden cross. Sometimes the cross is black with a white name-board; sometimes it is white. Often a crucifix of white beads, bearing a metal Christ, is fastened upon the wood. There are many bead wreaths, white or blue; some wreaths are made of lavender flowers. All of them bear some inscription: "To my husband,"

" To my papa," " To my brother," " To my comrade." And from the many name-plates it is the age that stands out: " Chamonade, Jean, soldier of the 43d infantry, died the 15th of March, 1915, aged 21 years," " Pierre Deschamps, Corporal, aged 22." So many died in March, so many under twenty-three.

A place too sad for tears, where women in black walk slowly and ask, for these silent ranks of young, why they had to die. And one can only bear it because of the little child that ran laughing down the hill, because there are other children yet to be born who need not pay the price of the spring of nineteen hundred and fifteen.

CHAPTER VIII

Nancy, the Invincible

I BEGGED very hard for that trip to Nancy. If I could get as far as that it would be possible to get a bit farther, and see the trenches beyond the city; or it would be possible to go through the stretch of Lorraine devastated by the Germans. But, above all, I wanted to see Nancy because the city had always touched my imagination. It is so flavored with the spirit of its people. Year by year through the sweeping centuries, back almost for a thousand years, they have made magnificent history for Nancy, — laity and clergy, workmen and soldiers, captains and kings, and the crown of them were the great dukes of Lorraine. They passed along the streets to hold court or to go to the hunt or to go to their devotions in their chapels, — and at last to go to their eternal rest with lofty funeral pomp. They were not afraid of death, those high and puissant lords; they liked to face it, and they wished to surround it with pomp and circumstance. Nor were they afraid of being forgotten by Nancy or by France, for in their shadowy, still chapel is blazoned this inscription: "You who pass, stop and wonder at these tombs; among these dukes of Lorraine are so many heroes, among their

duchesses so many great women, among their children so many princes born for the throne worthier still of heaven." And the reading on each tomb begins, "To the immortal memory of ——"

But particularly I wanted to go to Nancy because of her present history. For if ever the soul of a nation can be expressed in stone, then Nancy, the beautiful, is the soul of France. As she stands against the Germans, so stands all France.

"You shall not have us," the people of Nancy say, "and all those murderous shells you cast upon us shall find us unmoved."

The Germans have always wanted Nancy as a predatory long-plotting man may covet a woman whom some jealous nerve warns him is not for him. Centuries ago, when she was nothing but a castle, they wanted her. Their desire grew with the centuries. The Franco-Prussian War, and their eager hands came close. They punished the Nancy they dared not take with heavy tributes. They would crush if they could not conquer. Their love for her took on a tinge of hate, — a tinge that should disappear once they possessed her. Nancy's manufactures must die if her nationality did not. And then, once more, the imperturbable city triumphed over her enemies. For when almost half of the Alsatians in conquered Alsace refused German nationality thousands of them migrated from Strasbourg to Nancy and revivified the industries. So Nancy had taken what

belonged to Germany! One more reason for bringing Nancy to her knees. The tinge of hate grew deeper. Nancy was a frontier city, and what frontier but may be changed? Just a few years of waiting, — just till The Day.

The Day has come, but Nancy is still untaken. And when bombs fall from the Taubes upon her, when shells come roaring in from the great three-hundred-and-eighties, when buildings are wrecked, and little children are killed or mangled, Nancy says,

"We shall carry on as usual."

That brave city was like a heroine to me and I wanted to see her. At last permission was granted, and once more I set out in the deep-blue dawn for the Gare du Nord. And then my day began dramatically, for I met Ninette. Long ago, when I was a student in Paris, I had known Ninette in a casual way. I lived in a street on the edge of the Latin Quarter, in the middle of which was a little laundry. Whenever I entered I would see the beautiful ten-year-old Ninette, staring from behind the counter with eyes too eager.

I would see her peering from behind the skirts of her shrewish step-mother at the young men of the studios as they passed by with their *filettes* on their arms. And I am afraid that Ninette's eyes were too knowing. The *concierge* of the building where I lived, who sat always in the doorway, or at the window, scrutinizing and estimating the life that went by her, said of Ninette,

" She will become a *fille de joie,* that one. But what can you expect, with such a stepmother! Clean clothes, that woman makes, but her heart is a coal! "

A few months before the war, when I was back in Paris and was visiting my old stamping-grounds, I sought the *concierge* to find out what had become of everybody. She gave me a systematic history of the street, from the restaurant at one end to the *patisserie* at the other. Half way down she spoke of Ninette.

" She became a model early, that young one," said the *concierge.* " Her face and figure, — ah, well, one need not be a painter to admire them. She did well enough. If she had been wise, madame, she could have made money, and in the end married some decent workman and set up a little shop. But no, two years ago she must throw herself away on a worthless gamin. She gives her very skin to that one, madame. He eats her money up, he drinks, he beats her, but she will not leave him. This will show you how worthless he is, madame. He is called Ninette's *ami.* People do not trouble themselves to remember his name. She is finished, is Ninette, madame."

The next time I saw the *concierge* was a few days before I took the trip to Nancy. A tall, beautiful girl was with her — Ninette. Her eyes were sad, and yet proud; her hands were roughened, and she was, for a Parisian, rather carelessly dressed. I found out afterwards that

she worked in the kitchen of a hotel. After greetings were over the *concierge* said,

"Tell madame about your René. Tell her; for you have reason to be proud, my girl. He is Ninette's *ami,* that madame knows of," she added to me.

Ninette glowed and spoke and then faltered. René was wonderful; so brave. He had gone into the terrible trenches and had never flinched, had laughed and sung, had done inconceivably brave things. He had won the *croix de guerre;* more than that, an honor almost unheard of for a private, he had won a commission. He was a man to rule men was René.

Just one of the common instances of a useless creature being made over into a man by the war.

"It was Ninette," said the *concierge* proudly, "who gave this man to France. He is coming back on his *permission,* — the first he has had in two years. All his friends in the Quarter will praise him, but there are some of us who will praise Ninette more."

Ninette flushed, paled, seemed to quail, and soon withdrew.

"Poor child," said the *concierge,* "she has known of other cases of men who were killed just before their *permissions.* She is afraid."

I wondered if it were that. And when I met her that morning in the blue dawn at the Gare du Nord I knew the *concierge* had been wrong. All night long Ninette had sat there, waiting for

René's train. Her face was haggard, her eyes heavily shadowed. As I had over an hour to wait for my train I took her to a café for coffee. It was hard to make her go, for René's train was expected at any moment.

"You 'll look prettier if you are fed," I argued.

Ninette yielded, drank the coffee, raced me back into the station, and then said, her rich voice breaking,

"Ah, madame, it does not matter whether I am pretty or not, for I do not mean that he shall see me. I am only going to see him pass by. I shall not meet him. I am afraid, afraid."

"But, Ninette," I began; and then paused. Of what use to remind her of all she had done for him. Benefits can be forgot, and even gratitude cannot warm a love that has chilled.

"Do — do you mean he has n't answered your letters?" I asked.

"He never wrote; except to tell me of his decoration or to ask for a parcel. But that was like him. No, madame, it is not that. But he is a great man, now, and I — I am only Ninette. I am getting old; I am twenty-six. René, — he is twenty-five, that is young. There are so many pretty girls in the Quarter, and men so scarce now, and René a hero — ah, he will not turn to me. And who will blame him? I — I have not the courage; I will just look at him and go away!"

A surge of men in blue came through from a platform, and Ninette clutched my arm and fled

behind a pillar. I fled, too, — towards the train for Nancy. I shared her cowardice. Who would know, better than this girl, who loved him, the man's weakness or baseness? She might fear from a bitter knowledge, or from the timidity of her own love. I had said to Eleanor that in the war zone I was always getting the beginnings of stories or the middles, but not often the beginning, the middle, and the end. Here was the end ready to my hand, — and I ran away.

While I was standing before the gate leading to the platform where my train stood I did let my eye flicker over to that other platform. And I *think* I saw Ninette walking away with a blue arm encircling her waist. I *think* so, but I shall never know, because of my inability to bear a sad ending. If René failed her, if some young pretty hero-worshipper took him away and Ninette sat, like Ida, hearing

". . . their shrill, happy laughter;"

if the Latin Quarter only saw the hero in René and forgave, as the world does, the disloyal heart, — then I don't want to know it. I shall try to think of Ninette in what must have been her proudest moment — the day the first news came from the trenches about his bravery, and she could boast to her friends; the day her man stopped being "Ninette's *ami*" and became "René."

In the train to Nancy I found a comforting con-

trast to the episode of Ninette. Here was the happy middle of a story. An officer and his young bride shared the compartment with me. They looked disappointed when I entered, and I would have withdrawn if there had been another seat on the train. However, by determinedly looking out of the window I showed them that I would try not to be there. The little bride could not have been more than sixteen; her hair hung over her shoulders in curls. The officer was old enough to be her father. How they melted to each other, those two, murmuring and clinging. With what tenderness he put on and off her coat, drawing it closely about her white childish neck. Probably they had married on his brief leave, and an indulgent superior officer was giving them all possible time together. As soon as breakfast was announced I left them, lingering over it as long as I could; after that I stood in the passage between two tall officers bound for Toul, and watched the Marne valley unfold itself.

Soft hills, red roofs, Epernay, Châlons-sur-Marne; Bar-le-Duc; Gondrecourt, where the officer and his wife descended for their last few hours together; Toul; and twilight beginning. Then a deep-green stream, edged by tall, slim, evenly set trees. A barge drawn by horses was passing down, the bargee leaning out to watch the train or to gaze up lazily at the deep blue tent of the sky.

Nancy; a descent in the darkness, amid a surge

of blue soldiers home for *permission;* the little office of the inspector of police, who scanned my permit and me keenly and questioned me closely. For, at the moment, I was not personally conducted and Nancy must beware of spies. The hotel then, and the *patron* opening wide eyes at the sight of me.

"Pardon, madame," he said, "but it is hard for the stranger to enter Nancy now; in that it is like the kingdom of Heaven."

He began at once to tell about the advantage of his cellar, and I gathered that the traveller in Nancy now does not ask for a bedroom and bath but for a bedroom and cellar. I found, later, that nearly all the houses in Nancy bear, painted in red beside the doorways, the double cross of Lorraine, to announce that they have good cellars where passersby may take refuge during a daylight bombardment.

I had tea and some of the famous Nancy macaroons in a little *patisserie,* and I remarked to madame, the proprietor, that the moon looked very lovely coming up over the silent square. Madame pursed her lips and arched two delicate black brows.

"We are not quite so pleased to see the moon here in Nancy as we used to be," she replied, shrugging a shoulder in the direction of Germany. "Me, I do not mind the shells in the daytime, but at night it is disagreeable."

"Disagreeable" struck me as a restrained word.

" My little Pierre," madame continued, " that one, he sleeps — oh, but like a little pig or a Boche. The siren never wakes him, and he is so heavy to carry down two flights of stairs to the cellar. It is not a treat, that, to carry a heavy child so far. But it is better than if he cried and stayed awake the rest of the night. Now I have moved our beds to the ground floor."

I condoled with her, and then she said with a touch of superiority,

" Madame, then, has never assisted in a bombardment of the three-hundred-and-eighties? "

" No, but I have assisted in a bombardment of the seventy-sevens. Also I have assisted in machine gun and rifle firing."

We boasted gently, she trying to prove that the suspense induced by three-hundred-and-eighties was infinitely greater than that induced by the seventy-sevens, allowing no advantages to the fact of a view from front-line trenches. I described the sound of the seventy-sevens and the look of the black smoke; she, standing dramatically behind her fruit tarts and macaroons, described the bursting of the great shells.

" If you are in a village outside Nancy and have good ears," she said, " you can hear the faint whistle of the shell as it travels; then it bursts with a short dull roar. But if you are two hundred yards away from where the shell falls, you do not hear it coming. You hear a great report with a roar afterwards, and then you hear the houses

crumbling. It is a dull sound, that crumbling, but it does not last long. Glass breaks everywhere; there is a bad smoke and then dust everywhere. It is not agreeable."

She spoke almost indifferently, as if she would not give the enemy the poor satisfaction even of resentment. Suddenly she began to laugh.

"It is of my first bombardment that I think," she said; "my Pierre was with his grandmother, so I had not that on my mind. Me, I was staying with my friend whose husband is the *patron* of a hotel here. Of a sudden what a sound, — all the electric bells in the hotel ringing, all the telephones. The shells! The Boche! Quick, the cellar! There were two officers staying in the hotel who did not trouble themselves to rise. But everyone else ran to the cellar.

"Ah, madame, it was to laugh! Ladies so meagre in their dressing-gowns, and so strange with no rouge and without hair. And the men so thin, too, in their night-clothes. All pushing, with never a pardon! When we got down to the cellar — but it was cold! We sat on the coal and leaned against the hogsheads of wine, and the women remembered their difficulties and lowered their heads, and the men said 'Pardon!' and sat on their slippers to warm and to hide their ankles. It was very amusing that. The commercial travellers chattered their teeth with the cold and said they were not afraid, and told us what they would do to the Germans if they were not civilians.

They were not people of Nancy," added madame, with the faintest touch of contempt. "For us, it is nothing, these bombardments!"

I could scarcely believe in the bombardments that night. I was the only person apparently in the streets, and I wandered under the moon in the beautiful, still squares where the fountains sounded so loud and the stars seemed so far away. But next day the effect of the German warfare in Nancy was brought sharply home to me. I was walking in the beautiful gardens of the city hospital, and I found myself running in the direction of a ground-floor ward whence issued a baby's terrible screams, — running because these were cries too dreadful to bear. It seemed as if all the world should stop to help that little one. This was not at all like the fretful crying we are used to when a little stomach is in temporary pain or is in haste for milk. This was tortured screaming; it sounded like the cry I once heard of an animal that was burning to death.

I dashed open the ward door and came upon little six-months-old Jeanne Beçanson having her wounds dressed, — wounds made by the latest German bombardment of Nancy. One sister-nurse was holding the little martyred body; two others were dressing it; still another was putting milk to the baby's lips. That little mutilated body, deep in its waxen surface dull red wounds, ragged, ghastly; the little tortured face; the glassy eyes searching frantically (and in vain) for her mother.

The shell that wounded Jeanne wrecked the lives of four people. Her father was one of Nancy's soldiers. He fought bravely, which means that he fought like a Frenchman, and was so badly wounded that it was impossible to send him back to the trenches. After a time work was found for him; his wife earned a little money, too, by working at home, and, believing in fresh air and exercise, she used, in her leisure time, to walk the streets of Nancy with her two little boys. One day she was going home with the children to get luncheon when the siren sounded, announcing the approach of a German three-hundred-and-eighty. She was near her own door in ancient Grand Rue; she ran, but the great shell ground out the lives of her and of her two little sons.

There were other wounded people in that ward: little Reneé Blaison, whose mother and sister were killed; she has had forty pieces of shell taken from her body and she is paralyzed. But she smiles — except when Jeanne's wounds are dressed. Across the ward I saw a woman wounded six months before; the flesh was stripped from her arms and legs, and the bones themselves fearfully broken and crumbled, — like the house she lived in. She moans constantly with pain, but softly, so as not to disturb the others. There were other women with broken arms or legs; they smiled, too, except when the baby screamed. French people never complain in these days.

So little Jeanne's wounds were dressed, and she

lay too spent even to drink her milk. After a time she took it feebly. But she would not smile even when I made wonderful baby gurgles in my throat; she imitated them, tentatively, but she kept looking beyond me for a face she will never see again. Jeanne sees no reason for smiling. When she is older she will learn that France always smiles.

Ruins, — in one way they do not matter. To stare at buildings with the faces ripped off so that one sees all the interior as if one opened the front of a doll's house; to see walls pock-marked with shrapnel, and heaps of meaningless rubbish where once were order and meaning — all this is only too common a sight in France. But commonness cannot destroy the poignancy nor the sense that this hacking of homes and women and children, this attrition of a non-fighting city, is something worse than killing soldiers.

Nancy carries her wounded babies to the hospital, picks out of the ruins any furniture that is still useful, puts fresh panes of glass into whatever houses have suffered lightly (marking with yellow strips of paper the panes that have survived), and begins to clear away the débris with a view to rebuilding. Ever since the bombardment began this has been her way. By their attitude the Nancy people say to Germany,

" You can neither take our Nancy nor drive us out of her. Not in any sense shall she be under your power."

The Germans have a more or less definite system of shelling and bombarding Nancy. It rather makes one think of the processes of a nagging woman or man (for men naggers are not unknown, though rarely mentioned). Such a person has a devilish way of finding a raw spot and, with rigid finger, coming back at uncertain intervals to prod it, or, worse still, to hover over it. Irritation, nervous attrition, feverish waste, is the sole accomplishment.

For their attacks they choose a bright day so that Taubes may indicate the range, or a bright moonlight night. Sometimes shelling will be followed by bombing from Taubes. Generally they send two in an afternoon or two or three at night; they seem to prefer a series of three. According to Rule One of the code of nagging, they wish to induce as much unpleasant uncertainty as possible. The people of Nancy go to bed with their cellar doors ajar. Close to their beds they put wraps and slippers. When the great shell is fired from the German lines a French sentry hears the report, telephones with lightning speed to Nancy, and then the siren sounds. The siren is like a great foghorn. When we are awakened at sea by a foghorn we have a curious sense half of safety, half of danger. But when the siren of Nancy sounds there is nothing but the connotation of danger in that loud, long, sinister monotone.

After the siren begins there is a full minute before the shell falls. A good sprinter, travelling

alone, could reach the shelter of his cellar about the time the shell found its goal. A mother with two or three little children to care for might get down one story, but scarcely two. During a recent bombardment, when a little ancient nunnery was destroyed, the seven nuns were in the second story. They managed to get to the first story, where they were entombed. The rooms in which they had been were shredded into dust. They were dug out safely, for excavating parties go at once after a bombardment to search for people who may be buried in the cellars.

The Nancy cellars are by no means warm rooms next the furnace where one keeps the lawn-mower, the rakes, a few spare trunks, and an old bicycle. They are very cold, rather damp, dark, and narrow, with vaulted roofs; they spell romance, if you like, but also gloom and rheumatism. I went to a school that had an excellent cellar, and saw the children happily at play.

"What do you do in the cellar, little one?" I asked a pretty little girl.

"We sing," she said gaily, "we are not afraid."

"They are droll — these Boches," said another with a funny air of mature criticism.

But it was not droll in the cellar where there were no chairs, nothing but a dim lantern that scarcely made the darkness visible. The children not only sing, but learn poetry and are told stories. The first time they were taken into the cellar some

of them were afraid. They did not cry but they grew white and trembled.

"My little children," the principal said to them, "you must be brave. You must remember that you are all the children of soldiers who are fighting for France. Perhaps your fathers will not come home again. If that happens you must bear it. You must bear anything that will help France. If you are brave and make nothing of these bombardments you will be helping France; you will be worthy to be the children of soldiers."

That is the way the people of Nancy and of all France face facts. They face facts, but if they do not like a fact such as a bombardment they efface it as quickly as possible. The best way Nancy has known of effacing facts and ignoring them and getting the best of her enemies has been to carry on her business as usual.

I found in the munition works a further symbol of the spirit of Nancy. It was night. Our military car tore through the darkness but the munition factory was flaming defiantly with light. No German Taube cares to attack it for fear of being brought down by the perfect markmanship of the French anti-air-craft guns. The two vast buildings of the factory stand high, like steady, keenly-defined beacons. Inside there was a sense of crimson light, of dignified beautiful movement. It was more poetry than any idealized picture of industry could be — because here the ideal was real; the spirit of these workers, their

passion for France had to express itself in beauty.

There was no confusion. In one place men poured the crimson molten steel into the moulds of the two-hundred-and-forty shells, in another place into the moulds of the three-hundred-and-twenties. Here great rows of red-topped moulds were cooling for two or three hours; here again men were beating the red-pointed shapes out of their moulds, and others were rolling them, glowing, into a pile to cool for another twenty hours. There girls were filling moulds with sand, quick, intent. Overhead moved with slow, heavy grace great cranes holding pots of liquid fire. At one side girls formed the bodies of sand that were to make the hollows of the shells. At the end of the immense room the industry seemed for a moment to concentrate itself where forty girls pushed an unbelievably large wagon loaded with moulds into the drying-oven.

The grace and power of those straining young figures in their men's clothes and caps; the absorbed look of the alert, serious faces! There was in that whole factory no sense of wasted effort, no unnecessary noise, no hint of frivolity or lightness. Everywhere was a sense of harmony and beauty. It was in the great shop where the shells were being made; it was in the other great shop where they were turned and riveted and polished and tested and otherwise advanced in the processes of making. The oldest man and the

strong boy of sixteen who beat a copper band upon a shell struck their hammers, each after each, in a perfect rhythm. The dark woman who bent and swayed over a turning-machine was in key with their movements. If there were dirt and beads of sweat and weariness they were not apparent; the spirit of the work soared above anything sordid or ugly in the process. Those deep-eyed girls and gaunt men were beautiful with the concentrated passion, the *"union sacrée"* of the nation, the pure love of France. What they were doing was great, but they were greater still.

Nancy is perhaps unusually fortunate in her administration. Her broad-minded prefect, M. Mireman, her mayor, M. Simon, and her Bishop, Turinaz, work perfectly together, though they are men divergent in views and in experience. The citizens have perfect confidence in them. So has, for that matter, all Lorraine; one proof is that the paper money of Nancy is accepted in neighboring towns as if it were Bank of France money. Whatever these authorities propose or do the inhabitants accept. All the people are united by the desire to keep Nancy at her full stature. Great and small are afire with public spirit. There is a rich tanner in Nancy who, since the bombardment, has had his family constantly in the city. At Christmas he writes a personal letter to all of his employees at the front, and the " godsons " of his wife and daughter always spend their *permissions* with the family. There is a

banker who owns large lodging-houses in which he receives free of charge refugees whose homes are in ruins and who are too old or too ill to work. In his garden he plants potatoes instead of flowers for needy people. On his fortnightly journeys to Paris he carries for distribution to the poor there trunks full of potatoes and coal. Nancy first — but all France too. And these men are but two. The tally is long of people who are giving all they can to their city and to their country.

Many pictures I shall carry away from Nancy — the memory of the canteen where ladies, once of the Salon type, served the soldiers back on *permissions;* the great *vestiaire* where other women gave clothes to the refugees; a picture of a woman four of whose sons had died for France, as I saw her holding the miniature of her fifth and last son and looking, looking, as if her brave, passionate eyes could keep him safe; the memory of another woman, old, not strong, sitting in a fireless room because some day France might need coal more than she did. These Lorraine faces are not easily forgotten, fine, high of resolve, confident, infinitely kind. And always I shall think of little Jeanne and her wounds.

I wish I could have made little Jeanne smile, but I like to think that she will smile. One day, when the war is well over and her broken father is at rest beside her mother and little brothers, she will walk the beautiful squares of Nancy with her lover. She will look at the moon that used to

mean bombardments for Nancy, and she will be happy. All these red griefs will be no more real to her than the griefs of our Civil War are to us. Each generation, perhaps mercifully, must forge its own imagination of evil and sorrow; each generation, wastefully, cannot learn deeply enough the lessons of the wars of the last generation. But the bitter lore of this world-war has surely told. Perhaps there will be no more wars to wound babies and hearts and to sear consciences. Little Jeanne will smile. Meanwhile brave Nancy smiles, stands steady, with her back towards the thwarted Germans, is serene, triumphant, can never yield to fear. For Nancy is not just Nancy; she is the immortal spirit of all France.

CHAPTER IX

The Black Trail

The military officer who had me in charge the day we visited the devastated districts in Lorraine asked me to leave my camera behind. But I did not need it. I shall never forget the series of pictures that unrolled before me that lambent sunny day.

Of course we did not set out as early as we had planned. In France every clock seems to tell a different tale. We drove through one of the seven beautiful gates of Nancy, and bowled along a quiet road. From one ridge where the car stopped we could see across to the hills where the German trenches lay. Harmless-looking brownish slopes, once the easy pasture for Lorraine sheep, now a resting place for German infantry. For since the early month of the war, this sector behind Nancy has been quiet. By a tacit agreement each side has come to a "live and let live" basis. French women and old men and boys till the land almost up to the French trenches. Beyond the hill the Germans do the same. One hears stories of patrols from French Lorraine and from German Lorraine exchanging news with the Germans as to the state of their crops, and (favorite topic)

exchanging views as to the probable duration of the war.

We drove, then, through a quiet country-side. Only the road reminded us of the war. Men were driving loads of potatoes up to the trenches; or loads of wood. Soldiers passed by on horseback. Others were marching up to the trenches. We met two companies that had recently been released from an active sector, — those who had not remained there forever, or been taken to the hospitals. The men looked worn and old, but cheerful; they were glad to be going to a quiet sector.

Our chauffeur was a swift driver. He dashed us over the quiet country-side so quickly that we could scarcely see the abandoned trenches. Only when we passed through a village did he slacken speed. Each little village usually consisted of one long street, and in all of them soldiers seemed to be billeted. We saw them in the white frame of doorways, or in the dark recesses of blacksmith-shops or barns, or walking down alleys or in fields with young women. It was good to see them at play.

Here and there we passed graves in fields — the French soldiers who had died in helping to push back the Germans. Each grave was surmounted by a little name-plate in tricolor, the gift of an organization of French women. Here and there we passed a ruin. But I began to realize what the devastated region was only when we came to what had been the farm of Léomont.

As we looked at it from the road it seemed like any ancient ruin destroyed by time, its strong gray walls standing raggedly on a hill, high up against the blue sky. It was only when we reached it that we found that it was a fresh ruin, made, not involuntarily by time, but by voluntary German fire.

A large farm, once; here were the four square remains of what had been the house. Hard by were the ruins of outhouses, of cellars, and in the green grass between them the graves of unknown Frenchmen. As they stood, the ruins were perhaps more impressive than the whole buildings may have been; they looked like the fallen keep and towers of some great castle, so massive were they in their desolation. But the marks of shell and fire on the tumbled walls, the broken trees, the graves, all reminded us of the peaceful, happy agricultural life that had been forever altered.

From the hill was a wonderful view of Vitrémont Wood, where the French fought when they were retreating from Morhange. Here was the point of the last German advance. Up to this point they had burned villages by hand, but thereafter, whatever they destroyed was by shells. And on this hill the French won a decisive fight. It can be said in eight words: the Germans held it; the French took it. But what a costly victory, — over a thousand men killed and wounded in the bloody ascent of that rich hill which had never before been reddened except by sunset glow or the innocent scarlet of poppies!

And then, — the ruined villages; only too many of them; and all stark and terrible under the mellow sunlight. Usually the sight of ruins is pleasurable. The old stones with their clinging ivy stand for history, and for that concentrated romance which it is so hard to find in ordinary daily living. The old tragedies associated with the old stones happened so long ago that they touch the imagination rather than the sympathies. But the ruins in that devastated stretch of Lorraine country were raw, like wounds. There was no ivy; there was just the fresh signs of blighted living.

Each village had its own individuality, — a fact which somehow made the desolation seem all the sadder. Here was a little town, once of red-roofed, rough-cast houses, everyone of which had been melted down into two long irregular huddling lines. There was another, where the top stones of the houses had been shorn off in a jagged, uncertain fashion; through the broken side of one we could see a little court, with the pump still standing. Outside another was a flight of stairs, leading up to nothing. Here was a long ruined street of houses, at the end of which was a stone fountain. As we walked through it, a boy leapt out of a cellar and dipped his strong young head in the water of the fountain. He had come back to see what was left of his old home, and was living in a little shed which had escaped destruction. And everywhere signs of that peaceful life of the days before the war: a little shop with the sign

still standing, "*Epicerie*"; another with the shell-marked sign, "*Brasserie.*" Bits of broken furniture; battered basins; splinters of china, once precious; a fragment of old blanket; the tangled wedge of a garden where the flowers went on growing, for all that no one came back to foster them.

And the churches; the Germans seemed to have spared none of them. Here would be a little squat gray structure with its tall belfry; the belfry would be leaning, and the bell be fallen in the porch. Again, the roof of a church would be quite gone; instead of the floor would be a carpet of green grass, but the chancel, with its exquisite wood carving, would be intact, the high altar still in place. Not one but bore marks of German fire.

Sometimes a village would be entirely deserted; silent, except for the birds; abandoned, as if forever. Again, in another, some of the inhabitants would have crept back, to live in cellars. Here and there we would see a little pile of tile, or brick, a few boards, as if someone had summoned courage to rebuild. What was saddest of all was to see old women poking in the ruins of what had once been their homes, trying to salvage something that had belonged to the old life. Again and again I have seen that sad searching, not only in the Lorraine district, but in the Meuse district and in the ruined stretches of the Marne country.

An uneven sort of devastation there in that Lorraine country, some villages entirely gone,

others destroyed in part, others broken in part like Lunéville or Baccarat. Other villages, almost within the hail of the voice, would be quite untouched. When I asked the escorting officer what the German principle of destruction was he shrugged his shoulders.

"Madame imposes a great task on me if she asks me to interpret German psychology," he said. "Perhaps the Germans made the excuse that in this town there was sniping, in that the civilians obeyed the orders not to shoot. For myself, I think that when a German officer was angry or tired or more than usually drunk, or irritable because he was not drunk, he gave orders to destroy, or closed his eyes when his men took matters in their own hands."

All along I had been very chary of believing in German "atrocities." But in these ruined villages here in Lorraine, on the Meuse and on the Marne, I saw, with my own eyes, the evidences of them; I heard people who had suffered telling their stories without excitement, dully, with no apparent rancor. Far more convincing they were than if they had raged, as they made tally of their wrongs. And as they talked they made me see more than their words: I felt the reality of Lord Bryce's report, and of the official statements of the cruelties committed by the Germans in Belgium and in Northern France. Not for me could the tales be dulled by the excuse, "But such things always happen in war." An explanation or an

excuse never mitigates the kind of suffering those violated territories have endured. It can hold water no more than the civilian excuse for industrial atrocities, — "But that's business." As I listened to the monotonously told wrongs of these suffering people I tried to think of the German side too. But the best I could say for them was this: no doubt there have been cases of atrocities committed by our Allies, but they have been sporadic; whereas in the case of the Germans the frightfulness has been a consistent policy and it is only sporadic cases we find of Germans who would have been glad, had they dared, to show mercy.

Of all the devastated places I saw, I felt most pity for Gerbévillers, — the martyr town, the French call it. A very pretty place it must have been; residential, entirely, having no industries except a brewery. Hard by was the château of the Marquis de Lambertine, the pride of Gerbévillers, and of the whole country roundabout. Some of the white houses had fruit trees trained against the walls, and all of the outlying fields were well tilled and prosperous. Now, except for the brewery and for an almshouse and the *Mairie,* the town is a tale of burned and gutted homes. On the broken foundations of a small hotel a man has built up a little place of piles and blocks which he calls "*Café de Ruines.*" A woman has come back and has built a little wooden house on the remains of what was once her home.

She sells postcards, and points with pride to her pump, which is undamaged.

We met the heroine of Gerbévillers, Sister Julie. She it was who was the head of the almshouse. We sat in her little house with its dim old furniture and ancient pictures and listened to her tale of what she had seen and done, and looked at the Cross of the Legion of Honor which President Poincaré himself pinned on her habit. She talked to us for two hours, giving us the full tragic history of those black days that destroyed her town, and I think she liked to talk almost as well as we liked to listen. For, though no doubt Sister Julie must have known what her vocation was, still she has other gifts. She would have made an excellent actress. She sat on the edge of her chair, or strode up and down her little living-room, her face growing black with horror or contempt, droll with humor, fiery with triumph. As she changed her expression or made gestures, I saw Bavarian officers, German soldiers methodically setting fire to houses, soaring flames and murdered civilians. She is a little broad woman, whose plain strong face bears an expression of mingled spiritual exaltation and peasant shrewdness. She is executive and masterful (I am afraid I would rather be her priest than one of her nuns), and she is lovable, as the people of Gerbévillers can testify.

"When the invasion of the Germans began," Sister Julie said, "I knew it would not do to keep my old men and women here. So I sent them

away under the care of several of the nuns. Ah, I cannot tell you how sad it was to stand in the doorway here and watch those poor old crippled people going slowly and painfully up the street, crying, and turning around to look back at me! For see, they had all lost their homes once already, — the places that had been their very own in youth or in middle age. They had come here to this house, and after a while it became home to them, and they were happy. And then, in old age, to be turned out — ah, it was pathetic.

"But me, I knew I should not be idle; that there would be wounded men brought into the town whom I could nurse. So they were, and they all happened to be men from about this neighborhood. I had fifteen, some very badly wounded. But meantime there was the war at our very gates! Two hundred French soldiers we had, and they determined to defend Gerbévillers as long as they could.

"Ah, but they were magnificent! You will understand, madame, that the Germans could only enter Gerbévillers in one way, — by crossing the bridge over the river here. There was also a ford, but they did not attempt that, though we sent three men to guard it. Perhaps their spies had overlooked that. But the bridge; our two hundred men carried machine guns down there, and they held back thousands of Germans. Yes, it is the truth! Thousands attempted that bridge all day long, and were rolled back on themselves.

We knew it could not last, for we heard that thirty thousand more Germans were marching up to Gerbévillers. But our soldiers fought on hour after hour. They meant to fight as long as they had ammunition, and they expected to die.

" But they did not die. It was nightfall before their ammunition was exhausted. The Germans drew back to wait for the day, and our men slipped away. Not one of them killed. They went away by a quiet road on which there was but one German sentry. To escape they had to kill him.

" Ah, and when the Germans poured in on Gerbévillers next day! Figure to yourself their rage at the trick that had been played on them. Their thousands held back by two hundred! A Frenchman would have laughed at himself for that! Not these Boches. Gerbévillers must pay, — old men and women; mothers and children. They said, these Germans, that we civilians had shot their sentry, and that as a punishment they would burn our town.

" Ah, I have no words to describe the horror of it," Sister Julie continued. " Down the street came four Bavarian officers, followed by their soldiers. In groups of ten those soldiers went to each house and ordered the inhabitants to come out. Sometimes, even as they spoke, they made their guns ready to shoot, and they did shoot helpless people on their own doorsteps. Again they let the people pass, and the poor creatures ran across the fields, half mad. Others would not

come out of their houses, and went down to the cellars. But against the incendiary pastilles those Germans threw into the houses, the cellars were no protection. Those poor people were burned alive.

"Such sounds, — the roaring of flames, the shouting of the soldiers, the crying of the people. I was sitting with my wounded soldiers, but I went out into the street to meet those Bavarian officers. They seemed very tall, and I, as you see, am little, but I was not afraid of them. I was enraged, and I said to them,

"'I forbid this. You shall not burn my house. Why do you do this barbarous thing to Gerbéviller!'

"I think that already the Germans were shrinking from that word 'barbarian,' for the tallest of the Bavarians said,

"'We are not barbarians.'

"I pointed to the burning houses, and, because I am one to say what I think, I said,

"'What do you call this?'

"I thought perhaps he would kill me, but he only frowned in a ferocious, ridiculous German way, and said,

"'Woman, in your house you are concealing spies.'

"'In my house,' I said, 'there are only a few grievously wounded French soldiers.'

"Those great brutes of Bavarians did not believe me! They ran into my house. But I, for all that I am old, I am nimble, too. I entered first,

I assure you. I ran into the room where my fifteen wounded men were. The largest officer drew his sabre, and he thrust at the throat of the poor boy nearest him. But I put my hands on that boy's throat, and the point of the sabre grazed them. Ah, what a moment! I expected nothing but death! But what could I do? I had to protect that soldier of France."

We were breathless! Through her speaking face, her gestures, her words, we saw the picture.

"So," went on Sister Julie, "I said to that officer,

"'I will make a bargain with you. Let my wounded men alone, and I will nurse your German soldiers when they are wounded, — for wounded they will surely be, if they march further into our France.'

"So," concluded Sister Julie, "we struck that bargain, and those officers went out, and very glad indeed I was to see their backs. My poor soldiers had been so afraid, — for the wounded are afraid of death as men in the trenches are not. But they dragged their poor bodies upright, and they said to me,

"'Ah, it was a very bad quarter of an hour, Sister, but thanks to you, we are safe!'"

How she made us see it all, — the violent Bavarians, the trembling wounded men, remembering their manners, her own unrepressed wrath and pity!

"Ah, those villains!" she said. "Those Germans! Even when their officers gave orders that

they were not to burn my house, they did their best in another direction. The fire had died down in a house opposite, and the walls were spared. That did not please a party of drunken Boches, no! There they stood, drinking our wine. They would knock the necks off each bottle and drain it in a long draught, so! The thought struck them to set that house once more in flames. Me, I saw them at it, and I went over to them, and I said,

"'How dare you disobey your orders, and set on fire a house that may destroy my house!'

"I knew enough German to tell them what I thought of them, and I made them come into my kitchen and carry over tubs of water till they put out the flames they had started."

We fell into gales of laughter. We could see those Germans goose-stepping away from the intrepid old lady, falling over each other in their efforts to obey her. There must have been in her a strain of authority which appealed to the German soldiers, because, later on, she cowed them again. That night she left her sick men, took two women to help, and went to a stable where horses and cows had been burned alive. She cut off such of their flesh as was usable, carried it home, and began to make a stew of it. Led by the odor, the German soldiers flocked to her door, demanding the food. To all of them she said,

"Out of here! This food is not for you, but for these starving civilians in the fields there, whose houses you have burned."

But there were others in Gerbévillers who did not fare so well as brave Sister Julie. Such sad stories as we heard. There was one mother whose husband had been killed in Alsace, and whose only child, a thirteen-year-old boy, the Germans hanged before her eyes. She cut the rope herself. She says he still breathed, but breathing or not, the Germans refused to let her take away his body. There was the boy of fifteen, shot as he ran towards his home. There were stories of this old man taken to Germany a prisoner, that girl hurried into the river, this man dragged away from the smouldering house where were the burned bodies of his parents. Above all, there was the story of the fifteen old men. Sister Julie's voice broke as she told of them.

"Ah, those brave old men," she said, her flashing dark eyes misty, "our patriarchs, they were. And this — this is all that is left of them!"

We saw a photograph of fifteen old men, lying, in groups of five, in the long grass, under the trees. Their trousers had been unbuttoned, — the sort of insult the Germans seem to like to show people who they think can be especially hurt through infringement of their personal dignity. There they lay, lax and huddled, these old men who had been chosen as the chief sacrifice to German wrath.

"Cruel!" cried Sister Julie. "This was the manner of their death. The Germans marched them out under that tree. An officer sat a little

way off at a table in the sunshine, drinking the wine that had been stolen from our cellars. He ordered that those old men should be shot in groups of five. They were drawn up into three groups, and the Germans were drawn up before them, their rifles ready. The officer was to give the signal for the shooting. This was his method: when he took up his glass to drink for the first time, five were shot; when he drank for the second time, five more; the third time, five more. Ah, the cruelty of that! The way he dallied over his wine, — our wine! The suspense of those old brave ones! There was one of them who died as he was rolling a cigarette; they could not show fear, our men of Gerbévillers! But for us — to see those brave old bodies. And for days after we would find patches of their gray hair against the wall behind them — ! Ah, it was terrible! Three weeks it was before the Germans went away! three weeks, that they were our masters!

"Me, they constantly sent for to go to the *Mairie,* where they had their headquarters. They questioned me; it took all my skill to answer the questions in a way to satisfy both myself and them. I told them nothing that could harm France. Every time I left the house my poor wounded boys would cry after me. They were afraid to be without me. It is so with the badly wounded; in their nerves they are as little children."

"Tell me, Sister," I said, "did German wounded come and did you nurse them?"

Sister Julie pursed her strong mouth and tapped her hand on the oilcloth-covered table. Luckily for my self-control she did not raise her eyes as she said,

"Ah, yes, but, madame, I found that I hated them. This distressed me, so I went to my confessor and asked him if this hatred was a sin.

"'My daughter,' he said, 'if this is personal hate, it is wrong; but if it is national hate, it is right.'

"So," concluded Sister Julie, naïvely, "I called it national hate!"

It was quite dark when we left Sister Julie's little house. We picked our way slowly along the muddy road, between the dark broken walls of Gerbévillers, behind which were none of the little lights of home. We wondered if there could be, ever again. And then, as we turned into the road towards Nancy, we came upon a pair of lovers, walking in the moonlight. They were careless of us; they were careless of the ruins about them. All they saw was their own love, their own hope. Looking at them, one drew the comfort that some day, when the griefs of this generation are past, others, to whom the war will be only a dramatic tale, will build new homes on the ruins of Lorraine, and they will build with a faith and a security which we do not know.

CHAPTER X

The Fostering Hands

Poor, war-racked human beings have the same instinct as Bruce's spider: they want to rebuild. Humanly, spiritually, materially, they want to weave for themselves a new tapestry of life, of background, of habits. Marcelline put this into words for me one day, — black-browed, imperious Marcelline with the deep eyes and the mocking mouth. I had seen her several times in a *crèche* I had visited where she was helping take care of the children of soldiers' wives or widows, employed by the day. Marcelline was not in charge; and the woman who was her superior gave her the scrub work to do, was curt with her. This I had observed and also the curve of Marcelline's proud mouth, half sad, half scornful. One of the children in the *crèche* was hers, — a radiant vigorous boy, with strongly curling auburn hair and blue, lustrous eyes.

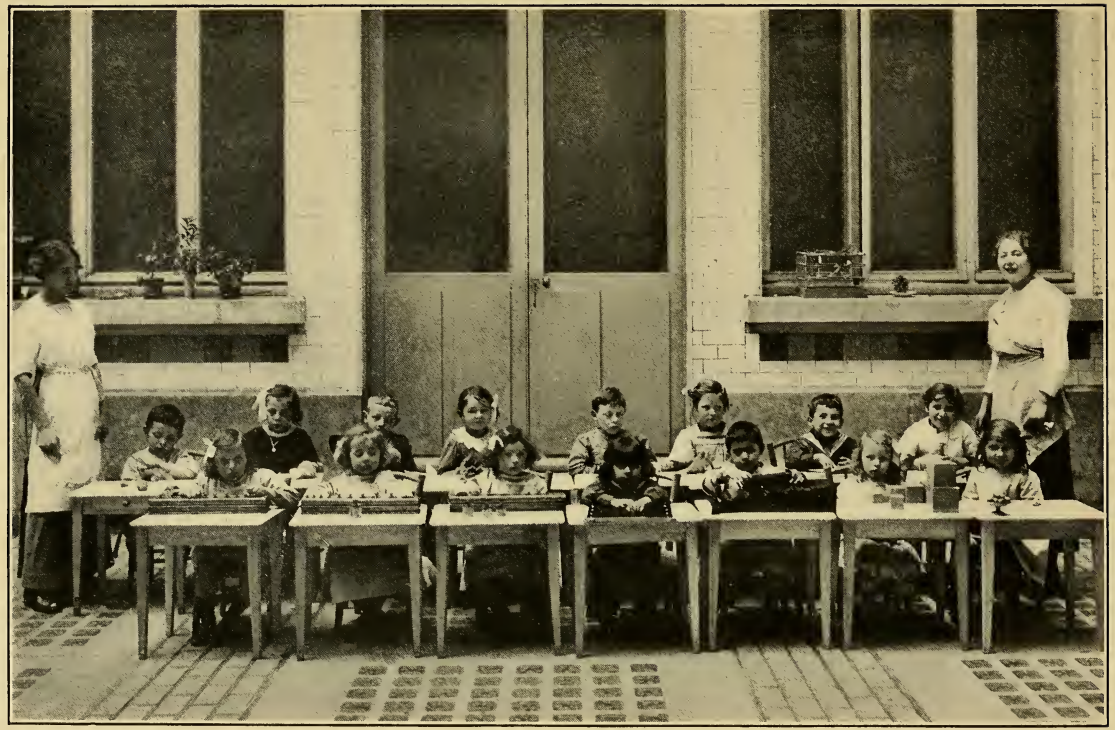
One morning I arrived early at the *crèche*. Marcelline, her own child in her arms, stood at the entrance trying volubly and energetically to induce a girl to enter with her. This girl stood with her head drooping, holding loosely in her arms a little anæmic child.

"Ah, *ça,* this imbecile," cried Marcelline, as

I joined them, " she will not come in; she is afraid they will turn their backs on her, will give her little one a cold welcome. I tell you, Marie, they are proud to welcome the child of a soldier of France. Tell her so, madame. Perhaps she will believe you. Tell her that because she forgot the priest no one is going to be hard on her. You, but you are a coward, Marie! You had better slip down to the Midi, where no one knows you, and pretend that you are a widow. Ah! you, Marie! " she added, clenching her hands. " Your soldier is alive yet! He will come back. But my Jacques, — he lies out there, and for all I know the Germans march over the rags of his body — "

Her voice broke, and abruptly she entered the *crêche.* I told Marie that times had changed since the war; that no one would be hard on her now; that the authorities would be glad to have children of the brave soldiers to make the new citizens of France; that doubtless her soldier would come back and marry her. So I persuaded her to enter. While she stood timidly before the matron, answering the questions put to her, I joined Marcelline, who was receiving the babies as their mothers brought them in. I think Marcelline understood my sympathy for her, but she threw her head back and smiled. There was courage and defiance and triumph in that smile. Then she put her hand in mine.

" I do not want madame to think I am sorry," she said, " sorry that I have my little Jacques, —



Day nursery, American hostel

through him his father has life again. He lies dead out there, and yet he goes on, in his son."

She paused to receive the baby of a breathless young woman, late for her work in an adjoining *ouvroir*.

"See, madame," she said, "this is the way it happened. We were both in the Pas de Calais, in July, 1914, Jacques and I, both strangers, a long way from home. We met, and we loved each other. We were to be married in the autumn. Then, — the war; before Jacques had to march to his regiment there were but a few days. We were not in our own parishes; there was the consent of our parents. We loved each other, and time was passing. Nothing seemed to matter, except that time was passing and Jacques was going away — "

Once more she busied herself with unwrapping a baby. When she spoke to me again her deep eyes were tearful.

"Three little days, — no more, and he died out there on the Marne. Died before he was able to write me even one love-letter. But I have his words in my heart, madame. And I have Jacques. Ah, that brave little one — "

There was a fresh group of babies to care for and it was some minutes before Marcelline could speak to me again. In the meantime her mind had evidently been flying forward, for she said,

"There is a whisper that these babies of France, born outside wedlock, will be made legitimate. I hope that is true. If it is not true, — it may be

that I will do what I bade Marie do, — go to some place where I am not known and take a married name. Perhaps to America, madame; who knows? For the long happy life my man did not have my little Jacques shall have. No shadow, no trouble that I can hold away will come near that little one. Madame, — I feel such a power in me! I thought my man could not die, because I felt so strong. He died, — but my strength will make for my little one. Hah! I shall be able to guard him!"

Brave Marcelline, already she was rebuilding her house of life. And everywhere I could see the process of rebuilding going on. The fighting nations tearing one another to shreds, destroying, and behind the ranks, civilian organizations and individuals doing their best to repair. Blind soldiers and mutilated soldiers being taught new trades, that, out of the fragments left of themselves, they might still give something to the world, and get back something in return. Refugees being sheltered here and there, new homes and new employment found for them. Widows who had never worked with their hands being shown how to be self-supporting; fatherless children being given a new family life, — sometimes with middle-aged couples who had lost their sons in the war, and who were urged to bring up another family for their own sakes and for the sake of France.

The white flame of courage in the souls of the

French! They must live, must work, must hope, must find what content they can for themselves, must give whatever happiness is possible to the next generation. Everywhere in France I saw this sort of bravery. I think it struck me most forcibly among the people whose homes had been battered down or burned, in the regions of the Marne, of the Meuse, and of Lorraine. For they had more to get back than other people in France. They had the task not only of spiritual reconstruction, but of the rebuilding of their houses and their blasted fortunes.

I saw the courage of those people symbolized in the attitude of Madame Lecontier. For at last I plucked up heart to go to the home of the Lecontiers. I knew their life would be changed; how else, with four sons of military age? But many villages in the region of the Marne had escaped. Why not their village? Many houses in a bombarded village escape; why not theirs?

By the time I found them their suffering had become to me only like that of thousands of others. Not impersonal, but part of a deep general woe. Of their home was left only a cairn of fallen stones, and the splintered trunks of the two poplars. Madame and the little boy and girl were there. They had come creeping back to see if they could till their ground, because that was the best way to help France. The father? Madame showed me the bit of wall against which he had been shot. The four grown sons? One dead, one

missing, two prisoners in Germany. The older daughter, that lovely creature, — madame only wept when I asked for her. Then she said, calmly,

"You see how it is with us, madame? The happy past is gone. There is the present, in which we three may work for France. Good people are helping us rebuild our house. We shall manage."

Poor, brave soul! for me she was one more mother of the many sorrows, one more noble proof of the will of France to live, to triumph.

That was the first mention I heard of the rebuilding that is being done in certain devastated sections. My first view of it came as I was swept through the little town of Sommeilles. I was being "personally conducted" and was not supposed to stop between Bar-le-Duc and Châlons, but my pleading prevailed.

At first sight, Sommeilles might be a synonym for the Biblical phrase, "the abomination of desolation": orderly heaps and rows of fallen homes and, in one gently sloping street, fragments of the church and the town hall, almost facing each other. The church is a square ruin, with part of the tower in good order, including the face of the clock. The hour hand, which indicates nine, has safely borne, for over two years now, the nest of a sparrow. Of the town hall there remain four pillars, the doorway standing open behind them between broken flanks of wall, and above, the pediment and a few climbing sections of stone.

I had heard of Sommeilles as a prosperous community of little farmers. The county round about was so thickly inhabited that the proprietors did not live on their own land, but in the village, going out every day to their fields. Of a sudden, the war, the invasions, and the Germans burning the village because they declared the civilians had destroyed a bridge over which the French had just retreated. So determined were the Germans not to leave stone upon stone in Sommeilles that they watched the destruction of each house, relighting any fire that happened to go out.

Billows of broken houses; nothing whole, I thought, and I was about to go back to the motor when I spied a little wooden house, looking, in that place, curiously alien. It squatted, as if tentatively, beside a mass of fallen walls and chimney which had once been a home. Its walls were of pine, stained brown; its roof was of red tile. In the doorway stood a stout old woman in a very clean cap, with a checked apron, not so clean, over her black dress. She looked, if not happy, at least contented. She took me in, and showed me her two little rooms, — a kitchen and a bedroom. Somehow, she had made the inside look French. She talked very freely, telling the story that never loses its tragedy in France, because of its commonness: a story of shock and bombardment and loss. Yet it was of the future that she spoke, and hopefully.

"For I have a home, madame," she said;

"those good English people called Friends, Quakers, they have built this house for me. When the Germans invaded we did not want to go. We are not like city people, madame, we who have our own bits of land. The officers of the army, — la! la! how they scold the women because they do not like to leave their homes, and because they run out to bring in the clothes off the line when a bombardment starts.

"We people in Sommeilles, when the Germans went, we came back. There was nothing to live in but cellars. If a house could be patched up in any of these ruined villages it was done, and two or three families lived there together. There was no one in all France who could help us rebuild our homes. But these kind people from England came to do what they could for us. They put up little sheds on the land, so the farmers could set in a new harvest. They gave us seed and clothes and furniture. For some of us, who could pay a little, they built these houses, and when my son came back from Verdun I was glad that I had a place for him. There were other men who came back from the front and had nothing, — no parents any more; no home. So it is — our crops have come back to us; some day our men will come, when the Germans are beaten. Ah, they are indeed the good friends, these Quakers! One of them is working below there!"

I followed her pointing finger. Across a field and behind a hill of stones rose three blackened

IN THE DOORWAY STOOD A STOUT OLD WOMAN IN A VERY CLEAN CAP

"We people in Sommeilles, when the Germans went, we came back. There was nothing to live in but cellars"

walls. A man was building a fourth wall of wood, and beams had been set across to support the roof. The man had his back to us. I nodded good-bye to the old woman, and approached him. He began singing before I reached him the favorite song of the British soldiers: *The Long Trail.*

> " There 's a long, long trail a-winding,
> Into the land of my dreams
> Where the nightingale is singing,
> And a white moon beams.
> There 's a long, long night of waiting,
> Until my dreams all come true,
> Till the day when I 'll be going down
> That long, long trail with you."

The crooning tune sorted ill with his powerful strokes.

" I wonder," I thought, " if he can be a conscientious objector? "

Hearing my footsteps, he glanced up. He had a good face, sweet and strong. Tall and broad, blue-eyed, straight in glance, he looked like a citizen any country might be glad to possess. If he were a conscientious objector, I decided he was neither a coward nor a weakling. We fell into talk; I asked questions, and he told me about the work in France of the society to which he belonged. Presently he talked of himself.

" The matter of fighting, I take it," he said, " is a thing one settles with one's own conscience and not with the military authorities; neither with the tenets of one's formal religion. My two

brothers, though Quakers, are fighting in France. I was conscripted and put in khaki. Like the other objectors, I refused to attend roll-call, was imprisoned, court-martialed, and again sent to prison for six months. I was asked if I would work for the government. I said I would do any work that did not mean directly pushing on the war. They let me choose this."

He drove in a few nails, and, as I watched him, I thought of the court-martials of conscientious objectors which I had watched in Hounslow. I saw it again, — that square room in the barracks, soldiers on guard outside the door; inside, the court, composed of three British officers. Before them, a prisoner in civilian clothes, standing between two soldier-police. Always, the charge read, and then a lance-corporal or sergeant to give testimony. Always the testimony ran in the same groove. "Sir, on the morning of the twentieth of September, I ordered Private Jones, etc." Sometimes Private Jones had the furtive face of a coward; sometimes he had the bewildered face of an idealist who has not thought out his problem; and occasionally he had the face of a man without fear.

Painful sights, those court-martials, and equally so the tribunals, where men were trying to get exempted. As the Quaker with strong strokes built up the little French house, I thought of the scenes I had watched in London: the panelled court-rooms; the row of civilian judges; the mili-

tary prosecutor; the men in the witness stand, asking not to serve at all, or else to have a few months' freedom before they need serve. There had been the tobacconist, a young man with a white strained face, who did not want to leave his little business just yet. The prosecutor asked why his wife could not run it.

" Because," the man had replied hoarsely, " she is taking care of our little dying child, our only one. The doctor thinks he will die within two months. If you 'll give me two months I 'll serve the country, and glad to."

He was given three. I remembered the thin boy, sick with jaundice, who asked exemption. As the prosecutor questioned him, his old bent mother crept up out of the audience, closer and closer to the boy, put her old clutching fingers on his arm, and whispered: " He was always a delicate boy, your honor." Six months for him.

There was the pompous old gentleman, asking to have one man servant allowed him for his estate. " Before the war," he said, " I had nineteen men-servants, indoor and outdoor. Now I have only this man left. For the rest, I permit myself to be waited on exclusively by women! " Gracious soul! But I seemed to be the only person in the audience who wanted either to laugh at him or be indignant with him. He was allowed to keep his servant, — possibly because the man was, in any case, close to the age limit.

I was seeing all this as the Quaker hammered

nails in the wooden wall. Presently, watching his fine hands, I said,

"I take it carpentry was your trade?"

"No, I am — I was — a violinist! I don't suppose I shall be able to play again. Work like this, in the winter especially, is crippling to the hands."

I think he was glad to be paying the price of his career for the sake of his conscience.

"You hold no brief for the conscientious objector?" he asked.

"I 'm afraid not. I 'm afraid I think that in these times, when so many men are giving up everything, a man ought to give up his conscience, and follow where his country points."

He nodded, gravely, as if he had gone beyond caring to argue his side.

"There are many of us here in Paris. Young men, — younger than I. I am thirty-eight. If you could hear them talking at night! They feel that when the war is over they must make themselves count, not only for peace, but for all sorts of good, for all kinds of civic righteousness. Not one but is ready to sacrifice himself, and all he has, to make a better world. They will give, one day, as freely as the soldiers here."

Ah, but they will be tested by the temptations of time, of easy living. The soldier gives all he has in a few hard months. But we did not speak further on that point. He talked again of the Quakers, and I listened, convinced certainly of his

Building the first house in Sommeilles after the Germans evacuated the village

goodness and usefulness. The work of the Quakers in France has been done so quietly that many people have failed to realize its significance. Dr. Hilda Clark conceived the idea of helping in France. In November, 1914, she took a group of thirty to Esternay on the Marne. The intention was to act primarily as a sanitary corps, in preventing diseases. But by degrees they did more. They established a maternity hospital at Châlons. They began to repair houses. Gradually their territory was widened, and their corps of workers was increased to about one hundred men and women.

They would have been glad to rebuild the houses of stone if that had been possible. But to meet the urgent need, the only practicable plan was to build a number of wooden huts, that could be erected quickly. The prefects of the Marne and the Meuse agreed that the Quakers should purchase the materials, the cost of which would later be refunded by the departments. By arrangement with the departmental authorities, the occupiers pay a minimum rent until such time as they shall be able to pay the cost of the materials used from the indemnity which will be granted by the French government. The indemnity is only to be paid on condition that the money shall be spent on reconstruction or for agricultural implements. It may not be given in the form of cash.

Steadily and energetically the members of the

Friends War Victim Relief have been building. They have repaired where they could, putting wooden and tile roofs on partly demolished houses. Where they could not repair they have built afresh, always considering the needs of each family. They have given their labor free, but they have given more than that. They have had a strong moral effect on the dispirited communities, toiling cheerfully as they do, day after day.

They have given the labor; they have given furniture and agricultural implements and seeds. In Troyes they are selling to refugees furniture and bedding at three-quarters of the cost price. They have a cottage hospital at Sermaize, a sanitarium at Samoens in Haute-Savoie for children from the invaded districts who have been undernourished, or whose nerves have suffered from bombardments. They have installed at Bettincourt a convalescent home for children in a château lent by the Countess de Morillot, and they have an *ouvroir* at Bar-le-Duc. Such deeps and shallows of life as they have come across, those gentle people who don't believe in making war! There was the old man and woman at Sermaize who had escaped with a few clothes. They had lost their house, but they had their fields still. One of the Quaker doctors noticed that the old lady looked worried rather than despairing, much like someone who had asked the wrong people to lunch together or repeated gossip indiscreetly.

"Is there anything I can do for you," asked the doctor, "anything I could buy you?"

The old woman cast a glance over her shoulder and whispered,

"Ah, Mademoiselle Doctor, if you would! We had fifteen minutes before the Germans came, and my husband told me to pack some of our clothes. I did, but I forgot his Sunday waistcoat. He has not spoken to me since. If Mademoiselle could but buy him a waistcoat —"

A flamboyant waistcoat was bought, and amicable family relations were restored.

Then there was the story of another couple who had driven behind their little mare Titine for sixty miles before the Germans, arriving at Sermaize. After a while their store of money gave out, and it seemed as if they would have to sell the mare.

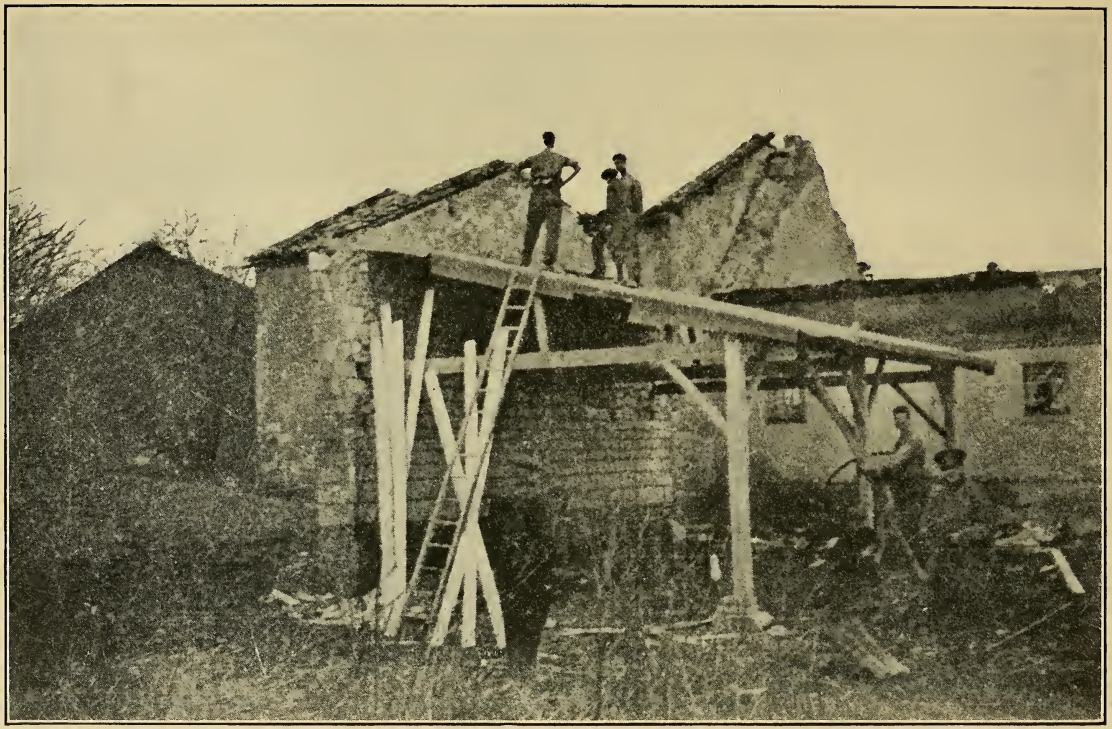
"If only we need not sell Titine!" the old woman said; "if we could rent her to some kind person near here, so we could watch over her. She is like one of our family, is Titine. When the Germans came she seemed to know it. She was so good, so brave. She did not ask for food; she took the water, which was all we had to give her, as thankfully as if it were food. We could bear having lost our home, if only we could keep Titine."

Arrangements were made so that they were able to keep Titine, who does ploughing and various farm jobs in the fields about Sermaize.

Sermaize-les-Bains is perhaps the most shining example of what the Quakers have accomplished. Before the war it had about twenty-seven hundred inhabitants. It was a summer resort; it also had a beet-sugar factory. The factory the Germans spared, and a flimsy wooden hotel near the springs. The rest of the town they put to the flame. When the Quakers came they found the people who had not run away living in the hotel, in the most insanitary and pitiable of conditions. They were half sick and half stupefied with misery. Now, rising from the ruins of Sermaize, which no one has had time to clear away, are little brick houses, like the cottages of English workmen, from which a hopeful people go out to their work in the fields and the factory. All but five hundred of the original inhabitants are back, and of the five hundred many are in the trenches. "The City of the Good Friends," it has been named.

There is one village I visited in France which is being rebuilt as nearly as possible as it used to be. This rebuilding is the gift of a California family who asked Miss Daisy Polk to select a village and take charge of its reconstruction. Miss Polk had been working in France since the beginning of the war and had her background well established. She had already won the name of "Mademoiselle Toute Suite" because she always insisted on everything being done "at once."

She chose little Vitrémont, of Lorraine. It had



English Quaker non-combatants building houses for the people of Sommeilles

been a typical Lorraine village, set in pleasant rolling country, consisting of some sixty houses, with their little gardens, fruit-trees, and, beyond, the farmers' fields.

It had a good church, a green well-kept cemetery, with a handsome cross in the centre. Of inhabitants, at the time of the German invasion, there were some two hundred and sixty-five. When that sinister gray wave rolled into Vitrémont it broke upon the little cemetery. For three days on that spot there was the bitterest sort of fighting, the Germans especially bombarding the cross. Seven battles were fought, but the Germans were temporarily victorious. They burned thirty-six houses and the church. It is odd (or perhaps it is significant) that in these little villages they spared breweries or factories or the *Mairie,* but never the church.

" Ah, ha, but they were fierce, those Germans," said old Père Barbier; " they seized me. ' You are our cook,' they told me. ' Now get us bread.' My God, what to do, I had no bread. ' Gentlemen, I have no bread,' I said. ' We shall kill you if you don't get bread,' they told me. Madame, it was terrible! No bread! No one to ask for bread; my neighbors evacuating! I took a stone, and I killed two chickens, running. I cut off their heads. I got three dozen eggs and made an omelette. I gave them that tender chicken, that delicious omelette, and some Lorraine beer. When they had eaten I said, ' Gentlemen, there is no

bread. I swear it, but I can make you another omelette.' And the captain said, ' Because of that omelette we have eaten, you shall not die!' "

Meanwhile the Germans burned most of the houses and, except for a few people who hid in cellars, little Vitrémont was deserted. The old market-women who used to sell their vegetables in Lunéville had fled there for sanctuary, — and eight of them were killed there by a German shell. The men were mobilized, the fields remained untilled.

So Vitrémont stood when " Mademoiselle Toute Suite " chose it for rehabilitation. What a joy to her it must have been to take up the broken threads of the lives of those people and weave them together! One by one, under her efforts, they crept back. She employed the old men and the boys of the village in clearing away débris and in rebuilding. The women tilled the fields. Each new house reproduced the ruined one it replaced almost exactly. When the new Vitrémont is fully rebuilt, it will be old Vitrémont brought back to life again. At present, if the forty men still alive in the trenches are counted, Vitrémont numbers one hundred and eighty persons.

It was when the church was rebuilt, roof on, and stained-glass windows in, that the life of the people in Vitrémont seemed really centralized. There the Christmas mass was said. Heretofore, the masses had been held in Antoine's house, and

it was not large enough for all the people to enter who wanted to say their prayers for the soldiers. But that Christmas mass, in a church large enough for the people of Vitrémont thrice over! And the christening of the first baby born since the war!

Miss Polk gives these people the love that takes account of little things. She knew what the look of the soldier meant who had gone away when his little girl was a baby in arms, and had returned to find her able to talk and to walk. When the first anniversary mass was said in memory of the eight old women of Vitrémont who had been killed in Lunéville, Miss Polk brought a bead wreath for the grave of each, — something beyond the purses of their relatives. She it is who soothes the nerves of some of the children, when the memory of the Germans comes back to terrify them, and they cower and hide their faces. If a soldier is killed or wounded or made prisoner, Miss Polk is the one to whom the sad relatives go for solace. Every minute of her time is taken in working in Vitrémont, and often, when she should be asleep, she is writing letters to stimulate the rebuilding of other villages.

That will come. To the fostering hands already in service others will be added. When I first went through those invaded regions I thought of them as dark twilight places where the ghosts of little dead children wandered, looking for their parents and for their homes, where the

ghosts of soldiers walked, asking for more life, where the sad voices of living young girls called for the lovers they shall never find. But now, in spite of those men in blue who daily die and are wounded, I see those ravaged regions as a place where hope shall fulfil its promise, even as a child becomes a man.

CHAPTER XI

The Good Little Pawn

I had gone to Annemasse, in Haute-Savoie, to meet some of the twenty-five thousand inhabitants of northern France whom the Germans, because they could no longer feed them, were sending down to unoccupied France. Since I was only four miles from Switzerland, I asked the prefect of Annemasse for a permit to cross the border. I boarded a neat tram that did not look at all like an international affair, carrying my camera and, in my plump handbag, some notes I had taken in Annemasse. I had a seat beside a much tailored lady; never have I seen so many buttons as she sported: a double row on her long coat and rows on her dress. In fluent English she instructed me as to the ways of the officials on the Swiss border.

"You 're American," she said; "do you know that you can't take gold out of France, or silver?"

"I did n't know about the silver, but I think I 've only a franc or two; I just paid my hotel bill in silver," I said.

She looked at me as if she thought I had gone mad.

"Did n't the patron die when you paid him in silver?"

"He did look rather grateful, but I thought

that was just his good manners. I did notice that every shopkeeper in Annemasse offers you paper, even five-cent bits of paper."

We got out of the tram at the frontier. On the French side was an arch, decorated with tricolor. Beyond were half a dozen French gendarmes, and on the other side half a dozen Swiss. As we crowded into the little customs building my companion whispered,

"If you have more than two francs of silver, I 'd advise you to swallow it. Open your purse; they like you to be ready and to seem innocent, in case of smuggling."

Naturally I began to feel guilty. The arm of an official forced the crowd back. I was let in with my companion and a stout man. A gendarme felt the man's pockets and whatever portion of him seemed padded. He was released, and sent to a table where three inspectors examined his passport. The lady followed. The gendarme glanced at my handbag and my anxiously innocent face. He passed me on to the three inspectors. The first one asked for my permit; the second one scrutinized it; the third, glancing at my camera and notes, all but ate that permit. They asked me where I was born, what my nationality was, where I was going, and why. Then they asked me to step into a private room. There a sympathetic lady met me and opened my bag. She shook out everything that was in it, — and laid aside the notes. She also retained my camera.

"Your hat," she said, "is rather high, madame. Of course — "

I smiled, and took it off. She poked it very thoroughly. She then tested my shoes. By this time I was amused, and was looking as genuinely innocent as I was. A French officer entered, and asked me for my history and inmost thoughts.

"Ah, but these notes," he said; "we must be careful. Could madame give us any further proof — "

I searched frantically in my bag. By good luck I found the official permit from the Maison de la Presse, stamped with the record of the various places I had visited in the war zone.

"Ah, I am desolated to have detained madame!" said the officer. Then he added, to the inspectors leaning forward from their table to see a possible spy, "This lady is safe to pass."

I wished to show that I appreciated his discernment, and asked to leave my notes and camera till I should be returning. This pleased the inspectors. I then departed, to meet the curious eyes of the tram-full of waiting people.

"Ah," said my late companion; "I wondered. You never can tell about people, and the last time I came over I sat beside a woman that was detained here and sent back, under suspicion of being a spy. The time before, I was just a few seats behind a man who was found to have in his shoes information about the new searchlights and anti-air-craft guns outside Paris. Also

these customs officers are very suspicious about smuggling. They are especially likely to be strict after someone has slipped across."

"I should n't think anyone would have a chance to slip across," I said, with a vivid memory of having counted some dozen French and Swiss gendarmes, all armed, guarding the border.

"Oh, sometimes a French soldier wants a day's holiday in Geneva, and he 's not got a pass. He will engage a gendarme in talk, and then run past him. The French are good enough runners, and by the time the gendarme is ready to fire the French soldier is laughing across the border. Then when he returns he gives the gendarme a few cigarettes. But they hear of it in the customs and are very strict for a day or two."

I began to talk of Swiss embroidery, and the lady volunteered to show me, in Geneva, a shop where the best could be bought. This she did, and presently I understood why the people in Annemasse clung to their silver. When I was paying in paper for my purchases I found that the exchange I had to lose was almost three francs in every twenty! In vain I offered English paper.

"Ah, we must live, we Swiss," said the shopkeeper, who was really doing pretty well as it was with the prices, "and English money may have become worthless over night. How do we know in these days?"

My companion, meanwhile, was ready to pay for her purchases. She did not offer silver. Very

placidly she cut off one of the large cloth buttons from her coat, ripped off the cloth top, and revealed a ten-dollar gold piece!

"It 's a lot of trouble to cover them, but it 's worth it," she said calmly. "The minute you were detained I felt quite comfortable. I knew they would not trouble me. Now I can buy all I want to, and bank the rest of the gold here in Geneva!"

Later, I found out how strictly Switzerland tries to guard against smuggling. She must be strict, because she has to preserve her neutrality. She makes munitions for the Allies, who send in their own raw materials to certain firms. Then the Allies watch to see that none of these munitions are smuggled into Germany. The Swiss make aluminum for the Zeppelins, and in return for this, Germany allows Switzerland a certain amount of steel, but sees to it that none of it goes to the firms that are working for the Allies. She does not trust to the precautionary measures of Switzerland.

Meanwhile, the smuggling goes on. Many of the commodities are sent across at night by boat, over Lake Constance. The searchlights on the Swiss shore are not numerous, and a nimble little boat may easily escape them; and if not, the shots that pursue her. Whatever casualties there may be are not advertised. Often men are arrested on the frontier near Basle at night for trying to drive into Germany noiseless, well-filled carts.

The penalty for capture is heavy, but the rewards of success are even more considerable. There are also, for those who wish to be comparatively safe, innumerable petty ways of getting things through, such as the false bottoms of trunks and heavily padded overcoats. People who cross frequently are suspected and searched. One lady who often travelled by way of Basle into Germany was examined on her final trip and was found to be wearing a corset and two petticoats made entirely of rubber. Just after big consignments of oil come from Italy the Swiss authorities are unusually vigilant.

There is not so much smuggling between France and Switzerland as between Switzerland and Germany. Not long since a piano going to France was examined and found to be full of saccharine. But generally the smuggling is petty. Old market-women from Haute-Savoie will try to smuggle in more butter than the law allows, in order to earn a little more to buy comforts for their sons at the front. Or perhaps some Swiss woman with a sick child will go across the line for eggs and will try to carry back more than she should. Nevertheless, in spite of all precautions, there are ways of getting food and supplies into Germany; for one thing, these can, by a little *camouflage,* be sent by mail, as presents.

But of all this I was ignorant when I stepped off the train into the beautiful serene city of Geneva! How delightful it was to walk down the rue du

Mont Blanc, to see the beautiful plane trees, the graceful bridges, and the green water of the lake, all such a fit setting for happiness. At first, after the warlike environment of England and France, I enjoyed breathing the atmosphere of a neutral country. But when I began to pass on the wide street German deserters and spies, I knew I was not neutral and that, until our cause is won, I preferred a warlike environment.

Geneva gave me more of a cosmopolitan feeling even than going into the Ritz in Paris. In the Ritz are to be found officers from all the Allied nations. But in Geneva I passed Germans and French, Austrians and Italians, English and Greeks and Rumanians. It was good for the risibles to watch a French and a German officer, passing shoulder to shoulder, each studiously unaware of the other, but at the same time not yielding an inch of the pavement. So rich was the life on the pavement, that at first I did not watch the life in the shops. But when I did, I got my first intimation of what Switzerland is undergoing. Except that she does not lose her soldiers, she is suffering as much as if she were at war. All her available men are mobilized, professions and industries are suffering heavily, and her prices have gone up enormously.

Switzerland is just a pawn. It is not fanciful to say that until the war came there were thousands of intelligent and patriotic Swiss who thought their country was as safe and independent

as she was democratic, and who have learned, in humiliation, to think otherwise. The case was first put for me in precise English by a little old man in a sort of musical shop, — the kind of place where you enter and sit on a chair, which straightway begins to play in muffled, silvery tones the *Merry Widow Waltz,* and if you won't get up follows, after a discreet pause, with some one-step. You pick up a gold-crested goblet and a cigar-box, and one plays the *Beautiful Blue Danube,* while the other swings into the *Marseillaise* (the shop being, like Switzerland, neutral). The old man was gnarled and brown-skinned and white-headed, a good deal like one of the brown Switzerland hills with snow on it.

"Since October, 1916, we've only sold seven dollars' worth," he said; "nobody is buying anything any more. All up and down this street you'll find curio shops and jewelry shops shutting up. Our export trade to England has stopped. Nobody comes in here except to borrow a match or ask the time. People don't even turn to look in the windows any more. I need not dust or clean except out of respect to the stock.

"So I have had much time to think, and what I have been thinking is that we were as vain as some beautiful girl with a good rich home and plenty of lovers, or maybe a husband that spoiled her, and everybody praising her. It would be natural for such a girl to believe in her own power and in nothing else, especially in nothing

evil. She could not believe that some accident could blast her good looks, or take away her lovers or her money; or that death could come.

"That 's the way with Switzerland. We 've lived mostly on the tourists, — people of the one class that come for the winter sports and mountain-climbing. I heard an American lady say once that they were super-tourists, people of the sophisticated class, that were hardly aware they were travelling. There were the sick people, too, the consumptives and the neurasthenics. Then we had the other class who came mostly in the summer and mostly for the first time, just frankly tourists, liking to be in Switzerland and to take away souvenirs.

"Now, you 've heard travellers talk a good deal, but, allowing perhaps for a little complaint at the size of the hotel bills, particularly in the mountains, did you ever hear them say anything but pleasant things about Switzerland? I don't think you did. There 's something in the air here, mellow, would you say? nerve-soothing, too; it makes people easy in their minds, comfortable, and inclined to praise. You 'll find that travellers are just as enthusiastic about Switzerland as they are about Italy; it 's a different kind of beauty, but just as appealing. Americans feel it, and then they have a sympathy for us because we are a republic. I heard a man say that there was as little graft in Switzerland as there was in America when she was a little young country.

"There you have it. We were liked and praised, and there were plenty of us who believed all we heard about ourselves and never thought anything could change, any more than a young soldier believes he can be killed; it will be his neighbor, not himself. Then came the war, — and we saw what happened to Belgium. Yes, there we were all, reading the papers and seeing what happened to Belgium and little Luxembourg, but we would n't face the fact that such a thing could happen to us. No, what we said to one another was, — 'Poor Belgium; it is as well we are situated where we are.' Or, 'Poor Belgium; if only her soldiers were as good shots as ours, and as well drilled, perhaps Germany would have hesitated before she began to march through!' We said that, though already we had begun to hear of great guns, one shell from which could ruin the strongest fort ever built. And even pretty wise men said, 'Of course we could not have beaten Germany, but we could have held her back so long that she would have made far less headway than she did by the way she chose.' As I sit here alone and think, the conceit of little countries and little human beings could make me laugh, — or cry!

"But these months of war have taught us something. Even yet, with all our suffering, we don't quite like to face the facts. What some of us say is, 'For real independence, a country needs a seaport.' But Belgium had Antwerp, and what

good did it do her? The facts are these: a country, to be safe, must have plenty of territory and cattle and money and seaports and forts and soldiers; if it lacks soldiers and forts it has to have a good barrier, like the Atlantic Ocean, that keeps America fairly safe. A small country, with no seaports, little cultivatable ground, dependent on other lands and other peoples for her living, with only enough soldiers to supply a few good massacres, — such a nation may be a republic, may be the most democratic nation in the world, — but she is not free. Compared to a country of the first sort, she is like a pigmy who is safe until he has to compete physically with a giant.

"Neutral we are, for neutral we must be. But however we talk, we have learned to know our weakness."

Poor little Switzerland, proud of her hotels, her scenery, her sports, her manufactures, and her population of four and a half millions. Why should she have seen her limitations clearly? So long as she could raise those hardy annuals, the tourists, she could live in comfort. She could feed them and herself by the help of four neighboring nations. The treaty of Turin permitted her to get from Haute-Savoie milk, butter, eggs, and vegetables. Germany supplied her with coal and iron. When the war came Switzerland made prohibition against certain imports and exports, — and got into difficulties with the belligerent powers. The trouble started with the question of

copper and rubber. The Allies, to make the blockade against Germany increasingly effective, asked that Switzerland should guarantee that whatever supplies they sent should not get into Germany or Austria. Switzerland consented.

"Very well, madame," said Germany, "what is sauce for the goose is certainly sauce for the gander. Where do you expect to get your coal this winter while we are engaged in pulverizing the Allies? And your iron?"

A rhetorical question, for the Allies could not supply the little country with coal.

"For reasons into which we need not enter," said Germany, "our cattle supply is short. If you want coal you must hand over your cattle."

That transfer had to be made, with the result that milk and cream and butter have become very dear in Switzerland, and sometimes simply cannot be had at all. To be sure, there was the treaty with Haute-Savoie, but Haute-Savoie needed her food for France. Result: high prices and smuggling and deprivation. Germany is sending Switzerland a minimum amount of coal, on the grounds that she cannot furnish transportation. France, too, is hampered as to transportation, and tons of food which Switzerland has bought from America and paid for are lying on French docks. Whoever enters Switzerland discovers at once that however the sympathies of individuals may lean, as a nation, the country will resist invasion from

any other country. The second discovery is that her pro-German sentiment is lessening.

Berne, as well as Zurich, Lausanne, and Geneva, are strong centres for German propoganda. It is carried on not only by newspapers and magazines, but by advertisements and private letters, by bribes and by threats. And many clear-sighted Swiss people wonder why the French have relatively little propaganda and why the English have practically none.

As Berne is the seat of the Swiss government, it is the headquarters for officials, politicians, and the commercial and diplomatic spies. The military spies are to be found chiefly in Basle and Zurich and Geneva. Many of them are deserters, who can never go back to their own country. The Swiss treat them none too politely, not wanting them to become Swiss citizens. The Swiss wish to admire their compatriots, and do not care ever to be outvoted by people who had the wrong reason for coming to the country.

Between one and two hundred spies have been taken, less than ten of them women. During the week that I was in Geneva eleven spies were arrested there. Switzerland does not care to talk much about them, but stories do seep out. There is the tale of the dead fish, floating down the river towards Germany. Some of them were washed ashore, and found to be of *papier-mâché,* containing information detrimental to France. There was the affable Italian, travelling with a large

trunk, apparently wanting to borrow capital for his factory in Milan. At Lausanne he disappeared, leaving his trunk behind. Impatient baggagemen shoved it out of their way; innocent travellers sat on it; a curious official opened it and found that it contained bombs enough to blow up all the city. There was the double story of the German Jew, Levy Moser, and the woman who loved him, a Hungarian. He was trying, seemingly, to interest local bankers in the attempt to lower French securities and bid up the value of the mark. The lady grew jealous of his attentions to another woman and betrayed him as a spy. She fled to Annemasse but was arrested there as an accomplice.

But France followed me into Switzerland, for I found Lucien — poor Lucien. I met him at the house of a Swiss woman who was not only neutral, but merciful and understanding. For Lucien was a French deserter. There he sat, in the darkest corner of the little Swiss sitting-room, a boy of twenty-two, but a child. His pale face was not furtive; desperate rather, lined with a misery that surely was its own suffering. When he knew I was only sorry for him, and not scornful, he talked to me. It is so easy to be scornful of a coward. I am sure that if I had to go over the top I should be terrified. I hope the difference between Lucien and me is that I should not run away. But I believe the thing that would keep me going would be good company on each side of me, and

the fear (greater than fear of German guns) of having to live with myself after I had run away.

"Madame," Lucien said, "it has always been so with me. I cannot bear a loud noise. I cannot bear the sound of groans. I cannot bear the sight of blood. I have always run away if anyone was sick or cried; if there was anything ugly. I love France, but I had not the courage to serve her. I tried,— but I had to run away. I ought to be in Zurich, or Basle, where it would be safer for me, — but there the Germans try to make a traitor of me. A traitor I am not. I could not stay there. I wanted to be as near France as I could. I was afraid of death from the German bayonets, and I ran away, but, madame, in my soul daily I have a thousand deaths!"

Poor little Lucien, looking, as if over the parapet of Switzerland, at that home which he will never see again.

I had not been long in Geneva before I found that Switzerland is not only a little pawn, but a good little pawn. She has spent millions in charities to the belligerents. She affords hospitality to twenty-five thousand of the wounded of all the fighting nations. She keeps them in military barracks and in hotels. She feels the financial burden, though some day she will be repaid. Her best work is doubtless that done by the Red Cross. Switzerland founded, in 1863, the international committee of the Red Cross. In 1912,

in Washington, it was suggested in a Red Cross conference that, in case of a European war, a clearing house for letters should be established. In September, 1914, the present International Agency of Prisoners of War began its merciful function in Geneva. To-day there are four hundred workers who receive thousands of letters from all the fighting countries, asking for news of missing soldiers. The Agency tries to get this news; it forwards letters from one belligerent country to another. For months it has been trying to change that cruel German rule against Belgium, which is, in brief, that no good news may come from that country. Suppose a Belgian soldier wants to get news of his sick wife; if she is dead he will be told that; but if her health is improved, he will not be told that. With infinite tact these Swiss members of the Agency deal with the harsh rule of Germany. They have relieved the suspense of thousands of suffering civilians in all the warring countries.

There is another office of the Swiss Red Cross which I witnessed. Every six weeks comes a fortnight during which the French and the German wounded soldiers pass through Geneva. Twice a day, between half-past seven at night and four in the morning, the two trains arrive. Members of the Red Cross, headed by the President, Miss Alice Favre, and the Secretary, Mr. Fred Schazmann, come down to the station to meet the trains with gifts of food and flowers and flags. Already

they have received between twenty and thirty thousand men.

One night I stood with them in the restaurant of the station, waiting for the train of French prisoners. The women were dressed in white; the men had the red cross brassards on their arms. Little Boy Scouts carried flowers and Swiss flags. Outside on the platform were wagons laden with soup and coffee, bread and meat. The noise of the train and a feeble cheer!

"Ah, they are the *grand blessés,* the heavily wounded," a woman said; "they are too sick to cheer."

The platform blossomed into color as we went out with the flowers and flags, and it rang with triumphant sound, for the Swiss sang their national anthem as the train pulled in. Oh, those sick, white, hollow faces at the windows! They smiled; they tried to sing the *Marseillaise.* We went into the trains. Those who were lying down looked up at us with faint smiles as we put flags in their hands, and held their heads so that they might drink the coffee or the soup. Such tired, dead lines in their cheeks; such signs of starving and anxiety; such glazed eyes! Those French faces, made for gaiety! But they knew they were out of Germany; these good Swiss people were to them almost their own people.

Then I saw these Swiss Red Cross workers show the same tenderness to the Germans. The French and German trains arrived hours apart.

When the train of Germans approached, and the Swiss again went out, singing their national anthem, and the Germans answered with "Die Wacht am Rhein," I understood why the Swiss could be neutral, because these Germans, too, had suffered in the wars, they, too, deserved sympathy, — only they had not been starved nor ill-treated in the prison camps. They looked well nourished. The privates I easily felt a sympathy for, but it was a struggle to look calmly at the officers. They took the best windows, crowding the privates in the background, and they looked down at us, bowing superciliously, condescendingly.

"Do those persons," I asked a Red Cross girl, "consider that this is a kind of triumphal entry, and that we are welcoming conquerors?"

"*Please* don't put that idea in my head," she pleaded; "remember that I have to be neutral. Poor officers! Poor soldiers!"

No one could have grudged those German soldiers their happiness. They had earned it. And how patriotic they were! Someone started their song, *Dost Thou Call, my Fatherland?* They lowered their mugs of soup and beer to sing it, their eyes alight, their voices deep. And their singing would have moved the soul of a clod. With them it surely is a case of "my country right or wrong," — only those men never doubted that she is right.

But it was n't the German soldiers who were

the centre of that scene, but the Swiss Red Cross workers. Good people; they do know what neutrality means, and what a wise, loving spirit means. The manifold activities of the Red Cross organization of Switzerland ought to teach all the warring countries what they owe to the good little pawn.

All the way back to the border I blessed her. Then I was passed again through the customs, and my camera and notes were given back to me, smilingly. The tram slid upon French territory, and I was back in the world of horizon-blue, where neutrality is not understood and where, for many weary months, peace cannot come.

CHAPTER XII

The Repatriates

The square before the *Mairie* of a French frontier town; snow falling thickly, softly; flags and bright lights, and beyond them a velvety blackness stretching away on one side to the Jura Mountains, and on the other to distant Mont Blanc! A crowd of officials and of townsfolk, expectant, eager, sympathetic. Far off the sound of a motor-train, mingled with a thin singing of the *Marseillaise* in shrill boyish voices. Then the sudden sweep of the train into the lighted square, and women, children, and old men, dark-clad figures, dropping heavily down into the snow, and looking about them with weary, gaunt, brave faces, stamped with sorrow — but presently to be contented, even happy.

They were people who had been without a country for nearly two and a half years, yet living in their own homes, the first of a consignment of twenty-five thousand whom the Germans, because they found them a burden, were sending via Switzerland out of occupied France into unoccupied France. They had just crossed the border after having been detrained and fed and cared for in hospitable Geneva, and now in the town of Annemasse they were to be repatriated, made to feel

that they were once more free. They were only a small proportion of those who asked to come. In Roubaix eight thousand asked, in Lille, nine thousand; but from each town only fifteen hundred were sent.

Helped by welcoming hands, they stumbled across the square and up the steps, and poured slowly into a great room all hung with their own tricolor that they had not seen for so many longing months. Flags were given them, were pinned on their coats. Children were taken from tired women; officials and attendant *Chasseurs d'Alpin* pointed out seats; the room grew fuller and fuller, and the passages outside became clogged. Yet there was almost no noise; these people were used to silence and self-suppression.

As I looked at them, sitting and standing patiently, waiting to be told what to do next, they seemed to me a more poignant sight than the thousands of wounded soldiers I had seen in base hospitals, the many other thousands I had seen marching along the road from Bar-le-Duc to Verdun, or even than the "*mutilés*," hobbling on their wooden legs near the Arc de Triomphe, under which they shall one day pass when victory is assured to France.

Picture to yourself the look of the emigrants that come in to Ellis Island, bewildered and exhausted; take away the dreams that emigrants have of success and happiness; add underfeeding, a burning sense of wrong and of shame, and you

will have something like the effect of these pilgrims from their own seized territory.

A strange, sad, abnormal group they seemed. There were no boys over fourteen among them, no men except those who were old, or middle-aged and sickly, almost no unmarried women. The Germans had sent back few people who could be of use to them, — only mothers with children who needed all their attention, sick people, and useless old women and men, and a very few, chiefly young women, whom some officer especially favored. They all looked ineffably jaded, — and well they might, since for twelve or thirteen days they had not slept in beds. When the Germans decided to evacuate them, they put them for ten days in barns where there was no fire and only straw to lie on. This was to keep them from getting any final information as to movements of troops, which might be useful to the French. After that they were searched, and then put on trains — travelling from two to three days shut up in uncomfortable cars, obliged at night to take care of their children in pitch darkness. Now these little ones clustered around their mothers, the more pathetic because they showed such unchildlike patience. We know how fretful even the sweetest-tempered of children may be after the strain of a railroad journey, or a picnic, or a circus. But these children, schooled by the discipline of their enemy, were almost uncannily quiet. Added to the weariness, every face wore a sort of mask of

resignation, or inscrutability. They had quite gone beyond any self-centred storms of suffering. And these were French faces, — faces framed for animation and joy. So they stood and sat, not yet realizing that they were in France.

The prefect, M. Surugue, rose, and began, in the most sympathetic voice, a speech that was talk rather than speech.

"I welcome you," he said, "in the name of France and in the name of Haute-Savoie. We know what you have suffered, and we hope here, in unoccupied France, to make you forget your griefs."

They thanked him.

"*Merci*, monsieur," they said.

But their voices, if polite, were apathetic. So far, he had scarcely touched them. One woman in black, with a little boy at her side, did indeed wipe her eyes. I learned afterwards that she and her four little sons had been living in a part of France bombarded now by the English and French. The Germans would not allow her to go farther north or into Germany for safety. The fire from her own people had killed three of her little boys. I can write and you can read of that tragedy in fifty words, but do we feel that mother crouching in the dark, day after day, and night after night, waiting for the shells that were falling in the street to strike her house? Do we feel her despairing hope in the hours when the bombardment ceased? Do we see her putting three sleepy

little boys on a straw mattress in the corner of the cellar, while she held the youngest in her arms, — and then the shell that tore into fragments the tender bodies she loved. We have no right to dismiss such a tragedy out of our consciences and hearts with the words, "But that is war."

An old woman beside her sat then and throughout with perfectly immobile face. She wore a bonnet and scarf in a fashion that gave her head and face the look of one of Michael Angelo's sybils, — and she remained as immutable. Now and then a woman cast her eyes upon her children to see if they were still safe, or glanced over at the desks where sat girls of Annemasse, ready to help in the official business of repatriating.

The prefect spoke again,

"Whatever you have suffered," he said, "whatever the Germans may have told you, never have you doubted the genius of France, never have you doubted that France would fight on to the end, never have you doubted that victory would be hers!"

Then how these people cast away their weariness and hunger, their grief and resignation, and sprang into fire. The prefect had not been able to move them when he spoke of their personal sorrows; they were quite beyond self-pity! But when he spoke of their country! Of a sudden they seemed to realize that they were home at last, seemed to long to put on instant record their

patriotism, their passionate belief in the victorious destiny of their France.

"*Vive la France!*" they cried, and waved, and their poor dull eyes shone, their lips quivered and smiled, and tears, that the Germans had never been able to start, rolled down their cheeks. Even the little children waved their tiny flags, and shouted, "*Vive la France!*"

The next part of the prefect's talk shows how firm the French are in facing facts. He told these women that as soon as they were rested they must work; the soldiers in the trenches were straining every nerve, making every sacrifice; it was chiefly upon the women at home that France must depend. The average underfed exhausted woman would have every excuse for weeping if she were told she must begin to work immediately; not so these French war-women, who seem able to bear anything. Finally the prefect, remarking that they could have had no real news since August, 1914, gave them a résumé of the history of the war from the battle of the Marne down to the final *communiqué* of the day.

Then began the formal business of repatriation. The refugees filed before the rows of desks where girl-officers examined the labels and passports which the Germans had sent with them, and made out fresh cards stating each person's name, age, profession, parentage, place and date of birth and of marriage, place of residence, date of arrest by the Germans, reason for evacuation by the

Germans, and duration of internment in each prison camp. The question was also asked as to whether the return had been voluntary or not. Then would come other formalities. After that, if it was the night division of repatriates, they would be disposed of in various hotels and lodgings; if it was the day division they would be started by train to their final destination, after having had some of their paper money changed into good silver.

While the repatriates were engaged at these desks, various people looked after their children. I was standing near a handsome fresh-colored young woman with a baby on her knee. I had noticed her chiefly because she looked well-fed, was well-dressed and well-booted, because her fine face had a passionate, sullen, and undisciplined look, and, finally, because I was afraid she was going to let the baby roll off her lap. I asked her name, and I shall translate her mumble into "Marie-Louise."

"You must be very tired, Marie-Louise," I said.

"Tired enough, madame."

"Let me hold the baby for you, then," I said.

She let me take him. He was a beautiful baby, with a strong head, good lungs, and predatory little fists, never still.

"What a dear baby, Marie-Louise!" I said. "What a magnificent head!"

"It 's a Boche head," cried Marie-Louise, vio-

lently, " and that is a Boche baby. I was hungry, madame. Those others in the village; they could not give me anything to eat, but they could give me hard words for having a German officer for a friend! "

Poor Marie-Louise! Surely she and the baby were equally deserving of pity.

" Some of them would call me a spy, now," Marie-Louise said through her tears, " but me, — I 'll show them I 'm not that."

She was summoned to a desk and I held the little Boche baby, and rather guessed that with a parent like Marie-Louise he would turn out to be French. Dear little chap! I wished his mother could have loved him, and I think he will yet find a mother who, believing he is all French, will love him.

I could not follow Marie-Louise into the various other rooms in which she went through the several formalities which finally turned her into a free citizen of France. But I asked about her. She had passed from room number one into room number two, where letters await the repatriates. They have been without news for almost two and a half years, nor have their relatives in France known whether they were alive or dead. Very rarely news reaches certain people through prisoners, and sometimes a message, not a letter, may come through the Red Cross of Frankfort. But in general, a blank curtain of silence has divided the people in the seized territory from those in

unoccupied France. Husbands, hearing that some repatriates were coming, write to Annemasse, in the hope that among the number will be their wives and children, or, at least, neighbors who can give news of them. Some of the repatriates look for letters from their husbands, and do not find them, nor ever will, because the men have died for France.

Marie-Louise passed through this room, knowing well there would be nothing for her and went into a third room, where sat a number of keen-faced intelligence officers, — several Frenchmen and one Englishman. They had all been barristers or judges, or in some branch of civil service where they had learned to read character. Their business was to weed out possible spies, and also to get what information the repatriates could give them of German military movements and morale, and conduct and psychology in general.

To these men young Marie-Louise said,

"I want to go into service. I want to work hard in some decent French home."

"And your baby?" they asked, "do you hope to keep it with you, or will you put it out to nurse?"

"From the moment I reach France," said Marie-Louise, "that baby is not mine any longer. It belongs to France, if France wants it. Take him away from me, that baby! Do not let me see him again, or know where he is gone. Bring him

up as a good French citizen. When he is a man make a soldier of him, and let him go and kill his father!"

Poor Marie-Louise, and sad world of war where such things must be, where even motherhood can be changed into such everlasting bitterness. This episode of Marie-Louise made me open my eyes wide whenever I saw a child less than twenty-one months old. There were several, and in all the cases the girl had been won by hunger or misery, and in almost all the cases they had no love for their children, or else a grudging, humiliated love. They had humanity enough; they wanted the children to be well taken care of, and to be French, only not to be known as their children. During the first year of occupation, whenever children were born of German fathers, they were bought by the Germans, at a good price, too, and sent into Germany to be reared. But for over a year, so the repatriates say, there has not been food enough in Germany to take care of legal Germans.

"It is like the German insolence," remarked a Frenchman dryly, "to send us back these women with German babies to feed!" Nevertheless, these babies will be sent to orphan asylums, each labelled, "Father and mother unknown," and will be brought up as carefully as if all their blood were French.

Women who have been known to be friendly with Germans are always sharply scrutinized.

Yet very few spies are found. Mostly the few who have yielded have been, like Marie-Louise, hungry; others have been victims. The woman the intelligence officers scrutinized most sharply is the cosmopolitan person, who knows two or three languages and who has travelled. The provincial woman is less dangerous. The neighbors of a suspected woman are examined for information about her, and their verdicts are carefully sifted. In the end, if there seems ground for real suspicion, she is watched, as unobtrusively as possible, until her loyalty is determined. Very few German-born spies venture into the convoys, as they are easily discovered, and, moreover, can get into France more easily as ordinary tourists. It is said that it is a favorite trick of the Germans to arrest a French woman who is malleable and take her away to Germany. Her neighbors pity her as a prisoner, but really she is being trained as a spy. And some such women go purposely, meaning to " double-cross " the Germans and spy for France. The main work of the intelligence officers has not consisted in finding spies, but in analyzing the information certain observing repatriates have given them as to German doings in northern France.

So these twenty-five thousand people came into unoccupied France, at the rate of a thousand a day, divided, as to their arrival in Annemasse, in six daily groups. They were not all peasants; some were quite well-to-do citizens of Lille or

Roubaix or Valenciennes or Douai. But whether the women wore Persian lamb fur coats and velvet hats, or old dolmans and shawls, or perhaps cheap crêpe hats, they produced the same sombre, exhausted, badly-nourished effect, and always they became revived when the prefect reminded them that they had never doubted the final victory of France. They hastened to report that German officials made this remark to every departing adult:

"Tell the people in France to demand peace. It will be better for France to sue now than later."

The message sent by the French left behind was this:

"Ask them to come and deliver us as soon as they can. But tell them that no matter how long we have to wait we shall be steadfast."

A pretty good showing for underfed people, for that is what they are. And it is also a pretty good showing that for all their exhaustion, and their preoccupation with the formalities that repatriated them, they did not forget to be grateful for what food they had had. One of the first women I talked to put out her hand for the little American flag on my coat, and she wept.

"Tell them," she said, "that one of my two children died for lack of milk, and then the American condensed milk came, and my baby boy is saved for France."

Then other women crowded forward.

"Ah! America!" they cried. "Our children

would have died but for America. Thank America for what she has done for us."

What they were referring to is the help that excellent organization "The Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern France" has given to the hungry people in those regions. I hereby pass on their thanks, and frankly beg that America will give to the Commission the additional support it must have if the population of over nine millions and a half still in northern France and Belgium (of whom between two and a half and three and a half millions are wholly or partly destitute) are not to starve to death. As it is, the Belgian and Allied Governments supply a great deal of money, but with food prices and freight charges rising and native food stuffs failing America must give more help; it has not yet given a tenth of what is needed — not only in food but in clothes and shoes. Most of the repatriates have had no meat for nearly two years, no butter and no milk; no potatoes for six or eight months. Nor can they, with meat nearly three dollars a pound, butter a dollar and a half, and eggs twenty-five cents each. The children would indeed have died but for the condensed milk from the United States. What they have mostly eaten is bread, — and the bread they do not wholly like. The wheat is milled under the municipalities. The ordinary milling of wheat into flour is from sixty-five to seventy per cent. In the first year of the war it was ninety; now the Commission has re-

duced it to eighty-two, but it will evidently have to be reduced still further, as so many of the people, in enfeebled state, find the hard, black, sticky product indigestible. The Commission only wishes it were at liberty to bring in fine white flour. We who never know what it is to miss a meal, except when the doctor advises it, owe more than we have paid to the hungry people whose land has been seized.

These people who came back were very ready to talk. The mothers said that they had asked to return partly because they were afraid their children would be undersized and sick, and partly because they could get no drugs. The Germans do not allow the Commission to furnish drugs. They say they need drugs themselves, and will not permit the French and Belgians to have what they themselves cannot get. Naturally, the repatriates spoke a good deal of their gladness in the prospect of getting real milk and meat, and some of them complained that though the Germans played fair with the food of the Commission, they sometimes took chickens and rabbits to send to their families in Germany.

In a village near Douai, any woman who keeps hens is forced to give from two to three eggs each week to the *Kommandantur;* which means over twelve hundred eggs. Whoever keeps a cow must give two pounds of butter a week; if she refuses, or is supposed to be cheating, she is fined a thousand marks. One woman with little children

slipped into the country and bought a hundred eggs at something less than twenty cents apiece. She was forced to walk for five and a half hours to the place where the Germans passed judgment upon her, was made to give up the eggs and was fined several marks. In the village of Hirson the people have to carry all their milk to the *Kommandantur*. The cream is skimmed off, and the people are then allowed to buy back the skimmed milk. In Hirson, also, the Germans requisitioned all the hay; paid for it with paper which merely stated that it had been requisitioned, but made no promise to pay, and then sold it back again to the people for feeding the cattle, insisting on payment in German silver.

Indeed, they say that the Germans are very keen on getting money, and sometimes force a commune to issue far more paper than it will ever be able to pay. Likewise, they collect all the silver they can. For example, if a woman wishes to visit a friend in the same town but in another commune, she must pay half a mark, and at the same time give the Germans three marks in silver for the equivalent in paper money, thus losing between twenty-five and thirty per cent. They make a good deal of money from fines. Anyone who is found to have hidden a bottle of oil is fined three marks; a bottle of wine, ten marks. In the Ardennes, whenever the people cannot produce their identity cards, they are fined from twenty to forty marks. When the repatriates were leaving they

were told that they could take away sixty dollars in French pre-war money. Before they started the Germans commandeered this, and gave them paper instead.

There were no repatriates but had something interesting to say. A woman of education and property summed up thus the situation in the north of France:

"As is the case the world over," she said, "it is never the people with money who are annoyed by the Germans. They respect property. From observing my poorer neighbors, I do not think that they suffered from the harshness of the German soldiers, only from the officers. And this harshness was never committed with anger — never. It was simply the system, the deliberate will of German *kultur* — just cold-blooded system.

"They were our masters, and it was part of their system to show it. Is it any wonder that some of us have been asking, for a year and a half, to be sent away? We 've had to leave our doors unlocked, so that those in authority could enter day or night. If an officer wanted any of our pictures or wool mattresses, or anything we had except our food, he could, and did, take it. If he was cold and lacked fuel, he could, and sometimes did, take our furniture to burn. Constantly the mastership made itself felt. We could only go a certain distance from our doorsteps without a permit, and visiting another town and writing to people in another town were impossible.

We had to be in our houses at a certain hour, — not before three, and not after six or eight, depending on the place and season.

"One custom that annoyed us was the constant posters and proclamations ordering us to do this or not to do that. We never got up without wondering what new poster we should see that day. Sometimes the town-crier would have to go abroad several times a day, ringing his bell and making German announcements. They annoyed us, too, by ringing our church bells in celebration of so-called German victories, — and they rang them very often! But we never believed anything they said. The thing that made us happiest, and this they never stopped us from doing, was to run out of doors and look up whenever a French or an English aeroplane passed overhead. That seemed to us to bring France and victory nearer."

One topic those I talked to spoke of most vehemently was forced work. They showed a great deal of feeling when they told of the way the men and boys who refused to work were treated. The French civilian prisoners are supposed to choose whether they shall or shall not work; literally there is scarcely choice. The following are the accounts given me by Madame A——, a bookseller in a large town, and Mademoiselle Jeanne, a seamstress from Lille.

"Our men do not want to work for the Germans," Madame A—— said, "because they do not want to be of use to them, and because they

are afraid of hurting the French who are fighting for us. What have the Germans done? They have taken away all the raw material from our factories, the cloth and the wool, and also the machines, and have sent them to Germany. In Courrières, the mining country, only four out of twenty-one shafts are working. The rest they destroyed, and took the copper to Germany. They have even taken our copper cooking vessels. They have made unemployment, and then they have said to our boys and men, 'Because you have nothing to do, we offer you work.'

"I have a son of eighteen who is a carpenter. Last spring the Germans came suddenly into my house at three o'clock in the morning. They woke my son, and said, 'Get dressed, and come with us.' They gave him half an hour only. They took him to the Ardennes, where he works on the land. They give him four francs a week and his food, — very bad food. I scarcely ever hear from him, and I do not know when he will come back.

"The harvest work is the worst paid, but a man who will sew sacks may make as much as fifty cents a day. If he will go into the trenches to work (where our men are sometimes killed by French or English fire) he may earn a dollar, while a man who will work in the munitions is very well paid. A man must be very badly treated indeed before he will go into munitions. But figure to yourself: the Municipality can only allow a man who is unemployed nine francs a week.

How can he live on that, even with help from the American Commission? And even if he tries to, the Germans do their best to break his spirit. The bitterest of all is that if he does go to work for the Germans, the money comes out of the municipalities after all. They try to win both ways, these Boches."

Mademoiselle Jeanne had less to say about figures, and spoke with less restraint.

"I am from Lille, me," she said, her dark eyes flashing, her brown head tossing defiantly. "In Lille we let the Germans see how we despise them. We ignore them; we act as if they were not there, and they don't like it. When we girls walk down the street, and German officers and men try to flirt with us, we turn away our heads, or perhaps we laugh insultingly, or perhaps we begin to sing a little air.

"This is the way the Germans behave when they take us away from home, — that is, if they are taking many from the same part of the town. They call out many of their soldiers, and they put machine guns in the street to fire on the people if they rebel. Then four soldiers come to each house from which people are to be taken, and they always arrive at two or three in the morning to make it more terrifying for us. They walk into our bedrooms and they say, 'Get up, and come just as you are into the hall.' So we must obey, and stand there until a German officer chooses which of us shall be taken.

" My parents and my sister and I were standing against the wall, and the officer looked at us, and pointed to my sister and said, ' You get ready.' But I said, ' My sister looks strong, but she is a cripple. I will go in her place.' He made her walk, and saw that it was so. Then he told me to dress. It was very sad to dress and pack, and my parents and sister crying. Then I was taken out of the house, and put in a workshop down in the town. They kept us there till five in the afternoon, — all those hours, when I might have been with my own family.

" They brought in other girls till there were nearly two hundred of us — very sad. But we were angry at the girls who let the Germans see them cry. At five they put us in a cattle train, and took us to a place near Fournies. There we found we were to work in the fields. They turned us into a filthy stable, where, as it was too wet to work, we had to stay for two days. We had to make ourselves comfortable as best we could. We went out and picked dandelions for soup, and found a little wood to build a fire. Some of the girls were children of rich parents. They had never done hard work, or suffered much deprivation, nor had they ever been away from their parents.

" When the weather improved they took us out in fours, with a German soldier in front, and one behind, armed with sticks. If a girl fell out, or did not walk quickly enough, she got a good

hard knock with the stick. They put us to planting and weeding. Then they quartered us in different houses. That was bad; men and women in the same houses and sometimes in the same room, and no French families left who could look after us.

"There was a woman in a big house near Cambrai where there were thirty-five German soldiers. She had two daughters, one nineteen and one thirteen. They told the mother she was to go to Belgium. She said she would not leave without her daughters. So they drove her out at the point of the bayonet. The girls they kept to cook and do the housework, and they are not allowed to write to their mother. When the older girl cried, and said it was not right to separate them from their mother, the German officer said,

"'This is nothing. You think you know something of war. You know nothing. Before the war is over, you French women will have nothing but your eyes left to cry with.'

"Still," allowed Mademoiselle Jeanne, "with my own eyes I never saw a German offer anything worse to a girl than a blow with a stick if he thought she was lazy. For me, after I worked in the fields they put me in a brick factory, where it was too hard for me, and I got sick. My mother begged the *Kommandantur* of Lille, and he gave me permission to be repatriated."

There was a stoical-faced girl of Valenciennes who spoke very calmly of her own sufferings, but

lost her stoicism when she spoke of the treatment of the male civilians who would not work.

"The Germans do not understand the spirit of our people," she said; "they try to change us by brutality. It is terrible, the suffering! We have some strong young boys and men in Valenciennes, and the Germans want their work, in order to release their own men for the front. When the boys say 'No,' they are put in a black prison, and given only a little bread to eat. If they still say 'No,' they are hung up for hours by the neck, or wire is tied round their wrists, and they are hung up that way. I have seen them so. I have dressed their cut wrists. I know. I think the soldiers of Valenciennes are cruel because they are better fed. It is a permanent base, and they are out of danger, and they have no suffering of their own to teach them what they are inflicting on us.

"Nor is this all, madame. When the Germans can get our boys to work in the fields, or the mines, they often house them in a barracks or workshed some little way from the town. This is lighted, and the French and English airmen, taking it for German munition works, perhaps, have dropped bombs on it, and killed their own people.

"But most cruel of all is this. Some boys I know who were strong and obstinate would not work. So then the Germans took them away from Valenciennes, close to the firing-line. They set

them under German observation balloons, because the French and English shell these very often. All day long they kept them there. Some were wounded with the shrapnel, and others suffered great suspense. At the end of the day the German officer sent for them and he said,

" ' Now, will you work? '

" Even the little boys have the courage not to work. I know of two boys of fifteen who stayed hidden in a cellar for two years so the Germans could not make them work, and friends fed them. One is dead of consumption, and the other dying. Two more of fifteen refused to work, and were sent into Germany to prison for two months. They were brought back when I was leaving, and asked if they would work, and again they said ' No.' I hope they will not put those brave boys under the German observation balloons."

When the Germans found it impossible to force enough Frenchmen to do their work, they imported Russian or Belgian prisoners. In a region in the Pas de Calais, the French in 1915 cultivated their fields, but the Germans took all the harvest from them. So in 1916 they refused to cultivate. Then the Germans brought in three hundred Russians. The men were literally starving, and begged the French for food. The Germans refused to allow any to be given; one girl was menaced with a gun for offering bread to a Russian. But the French buried some bread in the fields,

which the Russians afterwards got. The Germans also use the Russians to cut down the beautiful forests of the Aisne, sending the wood to Germany. The inhabitants say that these trees are cut down as the Germans would never cut their own. This may mean that the Germans do not expect to keep the Aisne territory.

There are several thousand Belgian civilian prisoners as well as Russians working in the Aisne country, and they are almost as hungry. The ration seems to be three pounds of bread for four men per day. The repatriates from the region of Laon report that the four thousand Belgians there are in a pitiable condition. They work on the railways and upon the roads. Whenever they can the French assist the prisoners, but if they are found out they are severely punished. One girl, whose family had a little money, was fined a hundred and fifty marks for putting half a mark on a stone where a Russian would find it.

Reports differ about the condition of the German soldiers. In the region of Valenciennes there is no doubt that they are well fed. In other places, when transportation is delayed, they may have their lean days. But all accounts seem to agree that though the fighting German men may be well fed, their families at home are hungry. The repatriates from Lille say that the German soldiers try to buy the rice that the American committee sends the interned French. Others say that the

German soldiers save up their rations for days before they go on their visits home, and that they always come back unhappy and silent. Some of them, indeed, have refused to accept furlough because they cannot bear to see the misery of those behind the firing lines.

The repatriates feel very keenly the fact that their municipalities are under German control, even though local native municipal and communal authorities continue their functions. The Germans have divided the occupied territory into three areas. The first is a limited section, just behind the fighting line, called the "Operating Zone." Here no food relief work can be done. The second, called the "Etape Zone," includes northern France and the larger part of east and west Flanders. It includes a population of something like 3,840,000. This is governed by a German general staff, and the subsidiary military authorities. The third area is called the "Occupation Zone"; its population, roughly speaking, 5,748,000. Here there is a joint civil and military government, with the seat at Brussels.

The Germans interfere very little with the municipalities, but when they want money the mayor must get it for them. Many people from a certain village in the department of Aisne said that each of the communes had been taxed four thousand dollars for the "entertainment" of the German army. Several mayors went together to the *Kommandantur* at Fournies to protest, urging

that they could not raise the money. The reply was to undress them entirely, and to shut them up together in a room, telling them that they might have their clothes back when they consented. The peasants and officials alike felt that there was something peculiarly insulting in this grotesque stripping away of dignity.

How many many stories there were, and all of them vivid, one for every worn face, and frequently one multiplied! The number never made them lose force or significance. It is strange and bitter to think of the commonplace happy lives these French people used to lead, now so horribly changed into tragedy. There was a baby of two with pale eyes, — sick eyes. Its mother had had to keep it in a cellar ever since its birth, because practically all the houses in the village had been demolished, and there was nowhere else to go. There was another woman, with two consumptive children. Two others had died, one, she said, of fright. The Germans had "turned her blood," had poisoned her through her fear! There is the story of a woman in a little village in Ardennes which the Germans had burned without notice. There was no means of rebuilding, so the people had to sleep in the cold church where her children died. There was Adrienne, the girl of fifteen, who came alone with her two little brothers, and no relatives to welcome her, or place to go. Her father and mother were killed by a shell when the village was bombarded. There

was a woman, plainly dying of consumption, with a wildly patriotic light on her face, and a beautiful two-year old child, as yet untainted, in her arms.

There was little Germaine, who was very indignant because, when she mispronounced German, she was whipped, something that does not happen in French schools. She told me of her French schoolmaster, who refused to use a book that called the Kaiser "Our august sovereign," and Germany the most beautiful country; he was sent to prison in Germany. There was a story of a man who would have been there if he had not been killed on the frontier. People try to go to Belgium to buy food, and smuggle it across the border. Some go because their families are too hungry for endurance; some because they want to make a little money. The sentries have strict orders to shoot, and every day poor smugglers are killed.

What I shall remember longest is little Ernest. I found him in a small house where he had been put by Mademoiselle Goessens, the woman who, with Madame Oriel, assists M. Perrier, the excellent commissioner, and M. Surugue, the prefect, in receiving and disposing of the repatriates. In this house were other children of whose history there was only the vaguest information. Two were Belgians who had been sent the previous year. Their father and mother were at work, and the Germans had come, taken the children and

shipped them away. Two others were so tiny they could not tell their own names. Two others insisted that they had parents, but could not tell who they were. Ernest stood at the snow-bound window when I entered the house, a little figure of infinite grief. He had a face the tragedy of which would have halted even a swift runner. His big dark eyes were still, melancholy; his mouth was hopeless, his little jaw sagged; his cheeks were thin and bloodless. He had the expression of some sorrowful woman who can learn nothing more of grief. When I talked to him he answered haltingly, as if he scarcely understood, and in whispers, as if he were afraid. He thought he was six years old. He thought his father and little sister were alive, but he did not know where they had gone. I was told that he had been alone with his mother when she died, and it was days before he was found. He came when he was called, let himself be moved about; it was dreadful to see his passivity, his broken nerves. They said he never spoke unless he was spoken to, and never, never smiled. I was determined that he should, and the next day I brought him some toys. He looked at them impassively, until I showed him a fat red ball, as big as his head, which bounced to an unbelievable height. Then, indeed, I coaxed a smile from him, — just a little flicker of lips and eyes, like faint sunlight shimmering on water. He took the ball in his arms and, leaning over to me, he whispered,

"Do you think I shall see my father and my little sister soon?"

Never again, Ernest; but the future is yours. Somewhere in unoccupied France you are being lured and loved back to normality and happiness, for you are part of the hope of the nation.

CHAPTER XIII

"When the Germans Came"

We all remember how, as children, we snuggled close to hear a story, knowing it would end happily because it began "Once upon a time." After I had been in France for a few weeks, it seemed to me that all the sad or dramatic stories began, "When the Germans came."

Men, women, and children have told me their stories, but it is the words of the women which sank deepest. Not that they have sacrificed more, or borne more than the men; but that so many of them are now homeless, alone, poor, and with the responsibility of bringing up their children without the father's help. The women represent the broken homes and broken hearts in France.

I have listened to their stories in Paris, or in the war zone; some of them were refugees, and some still clung to their homes, for all that German shells threatened them. These women were of all the classes: mistresses of châteaux, now in the hands of the Germans; wives of manufacturers or of shopkeepers who had fled before the enemy; those two classes have generally enough property so that they can pay their own way and perhaps help others. But there is the third class,

the peasant women, who have lost not only their homes, but all their little gear, who took their children and fled before the Germans, hurrying along roads that led them away from home to they knew not what new terror and strangeness. Their children died in their arms, or, in the huddling terror, were separated from them and sheltered by strangers, — or perhaps not sheltered at all.

Such women are taken care of in refuges in Paris and other cities. I heard many of their stories in Saint Sulpice, perhaps the most notable of the refuges, — a great building, once a school for youths studying for the priesthood. In the autumn of 1914, when the refugees came pouring into Paris, an official of the police force had the idea of using it for their benefit. His policemen helped him make repairs, served as stewards, and escorted the children to and from school, — a pleasant interpretation of a policeman's duty of guardianship. Hundreds of families live in the little rooms on the sounding corridors. The husbands, if they are still alive, come here for their *permissions*. The mothers, when they can, work to aid in their own support. When it is possible, they make homes of their own outside. All these women are grateful for the help that is given them, but they long for their native places. Most of them were from the country and they find city life hard. They were used to plenty of room. They long for their green spaces and their pop-

lar trees, — and for places to put the "things" they have already begun to accumulate.

For me the symbol of the refugee mother will always be the grief-ravaged face of Madame Grignon of Premesque, northern France. I saw her first in that splendid house of shelter, Saint Sulpice, where she was sitting in the nursery. At first I did not notice her, so absorbed was I in the rows of little pink and blue cribs for the babies. I walked among them, seeing occasionally a healthy baby, more often a sickly child bearing the marks of the privations and terrors its mother had suffered in the long march before its birth. My look lighted at last upon three depressed children, perhaps four years old, sitting at a table. I followed their eyes and saw Madame Grignon weeping silently, most pitiably. I turned her chair so that the children would forget her face. A nurse told me that her husband had gone to the front and she had stayed on in Premesque, hoping that the Germans would not come, at least till her baby was born. But they did come, and after the shells were falling in the village and the French and Germans were fighting in the streets, she took her three children, aged four and two and one, and she walked heavily, carrying one and sometimes two of them. She went as far and as quickly as she could, and when she was out of range of the shells, and the sound of the cannon was only a dull roar, she rested in a barn. There, all alone, she bore her baby, the other three chil-

dren crying with hunger and terror and cold. Then she went to Armentières and took shelter in an abandoned house. When that house came down she was taken to Paris. There her two youngest children died; she has no word of her husband, and Jeanette, her eldest child, lies very ill.

I saw Jeanette in the hospital. She was in the isolated ward and I had to look at her through a window. She had a pale, tragic, pointed face, and she gazed at nothing, morbidly, mournfully. If she recovers, it will be a long time before her nerves become normal. Beside her lay a little boy sick with measles, who cried pitifully for his mother. She was at work and the nurses were too busy with many sick children to go to one who merely wanted petting. Poor little baby; one little boy crying for love — that hardly bears thinking of, far less the hundreds of children all over France whose mothers as well as fathers have gone, and who need not only love, but food, clothes, homes, education.

Of the stories I heard, I give the three that interested me most, and I give them in the words of the central characters. I met a certain tall, beautiful woman who always wore purple. She reminded me of a fleur-de-lis; she was so pure in color and outline, so graceful. Mournful, too, and after I knew more about her I wondered at the depth of her sadness. For though she was a refugee and had lost her château, she had not

lost anyone she loved. Her husband, much her senior, was too old to serve, and she had no brothers. Also, she was a rich woman still. And, finally, she was very useful, working early and late for refugees who had lost their all. At last she spoke to me freely.

"I am sad," she said, "because I have failed France. You know a little of my circumstances, — that we had, my husband and I, a beautiful château not far from Lille. To me the war came as an utter surprise. For several days my husband had been in Paris on business. I had with me his sister, who was ailing, and my mother. I was so distressed over the health of my sister-in-law that I did not read the papers. When the men were mobilized my husband telegraphed us to come to Paris. But the news of the war had made my sister-in-law worse. I felt as if she ought not to travel. I sent my mother to Paris under the care of a trusted servant, and I wrote to my husband for permission to remain for a few days.

"The days rolled on, my sister-in-law did not improve, and we heard disquieting rumors of the march of the Germans. Again my husband telegraphed me, and imperatively, to come. It was a day or two before I could get ready. We set out, my sister-in-law and I. The last train had gone. I got a cart and horse, and the horse died between the shafts when we were only a mile from the château. My old servant Anne and I

carried my sister-in-law back to the château. In two days the Germans came.

"The first to arrive were two under-officers in a car. Old Anne received them. I was in my sister-in-law's bedroom. I could hear the men tramping through the halls. They came to a stop outside the room where we were. I heard one of the Germans say to Anne,

"'A good enough house, this. We shall keep it for a hospital.'

"Then he dashed open the door of the room and saw us. His eyes fastened on me, and he said, in a leering, hateful way,

"'I was saying to your woman, madame, that this shall be the officers' headquarters.'

"Officers' headquarters! A very different thing, that, from a hospital. For a moment I did not answer, and that made him angry, and he growled,

"'You ought to thank me! If this is headquarters your things will not be taken from you.'

"Then I thought of my sick sister-in-law, and I forced myself to be polite to him.

"'I thank you,' I said.

"Again he leered at me.

"'Come, now, you answer properly,' he said; 'only be kind to the high officers, and you won't lose much by the war.'

"Then those men went away. Next day the officers came with their servants. They took the best rooms. I had to move my sister-in-law up to

the servants' quarters, where I slept by her side. I can never make you realize what we went through. My château was safe at a time when my neighbors' houses were being burned or looted. And I had the blessing of hard work. For we had to feed those twenty men, and the food they demanded was of the best. Most of my servants had gone; I could find only two or three old women to help me. Anne and I did most of the work.

"Ah, those officers! Their arrogance! Their filthy habits. They had their breakfasts in bed, and always old Anne served them. I avoided them as much as I could. Most of the time I stayed in the kitchen. But sometimes, in the first few days, they sent for me to question me. Ah, their veiled insults, their looks —

"But later an officer came who seemed different from the rest. When he had talked with me he must have spoken to the others, for after that they did not trouble me. I begged to be allowed to go with my sister-in-law and old Anne to Paris. This he refused. Week after week we stayed there, with the dreariest of news from my beloved France. Then, of a sudden, the officer told me that I was to be taken to a prison-camp in Germany of which he was to be *Kommandantur*. My sister-in-law and old Anne he would send to Paris.

"It was a horrible journey to Germany, in cattle cars. I have come to believe since that

other prisoners were treated worse than we, and that it was due to the influence of this *Kommandantur* that we had room to sit down in the cattle cars and food to eat. The barracks in which we lived was badly built and cold; the food was poor, and many of us had insufficient clothing.

"I had been there a week when there arrived a friend from a village a little south of Lille. She had had word, after my château had been invaded, that my mother was ill in Paris. When next I saw the *Kommandantur* I begged him to let me go to Paris to care for my mother.

"'She may not be ill,' he said. 'Tell me her address and I will find out for you if she is ill.'

"I was so distrait that it did not occur to me to wonder how he would gain this information. But in a few days he came to me and said,

"'You need not distress yourself. Your mother has been a little ill with pleurisy, but she is now well.'

"I was grateful to him for this news, but still I begged to go back. He would not consent. But he was very gentle. He used to talk to me often of what a great country Germany was, and of the good she could be to her friends.

"'Why will you not be a friend of Germany?' he said. 'What does it matter to a woman what flag her country waves? It is a man she should love, and that man's country should be hers.'

"Madame, then I understood him, — very clearly. He meant that I should betray France,

should become a spy. He meant to make himself my protector.

"'Monsieur,' I said to him, 'I am loyal to France only. I am loyal to one man only. In these two particulars I can never change — never; not though I were starved to death, not though I were beaten to death, not though I were burned at the stake!'

"He left me, then. For a long time he did not come near me. He used to stand outside the enclosure that barred us in and stare at me. I would look back at him, steadfastly. Every line of his face I knew. I had so often looked at it to find softening. At last one day he came to see me.

"'You shall go home,' he said; 'but try to remember, when you are in Paris, that I did my best for you.'

"I need not tell you the happiness I felt at getting on the crowded cattle-car with other refugees, bound for home. What happiness to cross the border and be in Switzerland! What unspeakable joy to be once more on French soil; to hear that my beloved ones were safe! For a little while I forgot the horror of the war.

"And then, — I failed France. One day I was in the Metropolitan; the tram stopped at the station, and a man sat down opposite me. Idly I glanced at him, from the feet up. He wore the uniform of a French major of artillery. He had the *croix de guerre* pinned on his breast. I lifted

my eyes to his face. It was the face of the *Kommandantur* of the prison camp.

"And then, madame, I fainted. Then I failed France. If only I could have controlled my swimming senses, and clung to him till he was arrested, I could have delivered up an enemy, a spy. When I was revived from my faint he was gone. He has not been taken, and I — missed the chance to help France. Now you know the reason for my grief."

A story characteristic of the goodness and selflessness of a certain class of French people was told me alternately by Monsieur and Madame D—— as I sat in their little living-room in a suburb of Paris. She is slim, and quiet, with dark eyes full of tenderness and penetration. He is dark and florid and handsome, not looking at all the invalid he is. Madame D—— sewed at a little garment as she talked, and from a neighboring room came the voices of children at play. Monsieur D—— is a clergyman. Before the war he had a church in Quiévoy, near Cambrai.

"Such a good church," said Madame D——, her voice breaking a little; "such good parishioners. It hardly seemed possible that war could have come, that so many of the men of our church should be mobilized. My husband was mobilized, too, on the third of August — "

She looked at him proudly, as if his words must be more important than hers, and he took up the tale.

"I went to Paris, and from there, after a few

days by rail to Epinal, with a group consisting of two Catholic priests, one Jew, and a dozen stretcher-bearers. From there we marched to St. Dié, and then to Saales, there entering Alsace. For us it was like a triumphal entry. We saw many German prisoners, for the battle at Pleane had already taken place. Among them was the son of the most important man of Saales, who, a German subject, had been an officer in the army. There he was, with his sword and his horse, delighted to be a prisoner. For, in his heart, he is French. We saw, too, the first German flag our men had taken. Very happy the people were, to think of Alsace coming back to France! Yet they dared not betray their feelings too openly. Some who did the Germans afterwards shot.

"Fighting was going on, three or four miles from Saales; and wounded men were coming in. We marched on, bringing many French and Germans as we went. We won into German territory as far as Schirmeck. The Germans outflanked us there, but our group did not know it. We were told to turn north to Mont Donon. We kept meeting the French troops coming up singing. A dangerous march, that through the valley, for the French and Germans were shooting at each other across the tops of the hills.

"What drama in the villages we passed, some of them so much more loyal than others! One German officer, our prisoner, said to an officer, grimly,

"'It is very strange that so many German-Alsatians become your prisoners so easily. After the war Germany will make them pay for this!"

"'By that time,' our officer replied, 'Germany may have to do a little paying herself.'

"From one village a man had been telephoning our advance to German headquarters. The officer with us stopped to search for him. We entered a house, where there was a child of four or five.

"'Are you alone, little one?' the officer asked.

"'Oh, no; papa is in the cellar telephoning,' the baby said.

"I hope he will never know that he betrayed his own father. It was hard to see the man shot. I thought of my own children.

"In another village we caught a man in the railway station sending information to the Germans. In all such cases there was but a brief court-martial. In still another, where we stayed for food, which we cooked and ate outdoors, we noticed an old man keeping sheep on the hill. We had nothing else to look at. Soon we saw that he was leading his sheep in a most erratic way. He was signalling to the Germans on the next hill. Again we were in a village and we looked up at the church tower to see the time. We saw the hands of the clock suddenly change position. So we searched, and found a spy in the tower. This may explain why clock towers are often destroyed now.

"These spies, they are the curse of France!

They go about in Paris dressed as women or as priests. They listen to the talk in the cafés. They hear soldiers tell when the regiments they belong to went to such and such a sector, when they left, where they are going next. All such information is invaluable to Germany. The quickness with which the spies transmit their news is amazing. A regiment I know well in Alsace was changed to a sector near Rheims, and the very hour it arrived in the trenches the Germans put up a big placard: 'A salutation to the soldiers of such and such a regiment.' But then, spying is a German virtue.

"We retreated from Mont Donon through Badonviller, — it was hard going, with fighting all along the way, villages taken and retaken. I had had no word from my wife, and my anxiety was extreme, for I heard that the Germans had advanced to Cambrai. More and more we felt that it was a blunder to have gone to Alsace. We entered too quickly, — and then we were not prepared for such a war as this. If the thing could have been done with our spirit, — yes, indeed; but we had nothing at first to match the German guns. We should have waited for Alsace. And indeed even the Alsatians who are loyal are Alsatians before they are French. I think they would like autonomy.

"Our work was hard. We had to carry so many wounded men. There were supposed to be four of us to each stretcher, but sometimes, when

the casualties were numerous, we could use but two. Often we had to lift the stretcher shoulder high. One day I remember I helped to carry over two hundred men, the half of them Germans. I assure you it is as hard to carry one hundred Germans as it is three times the number of French. The Germans made so much more of a little wound; they would not speak, thought themselves quite finished. I lay the fact of my weak heart and bad health to the many heavy Germans I carried.

"And the manners of the officers! One time I remember we had a wagon in which we put a few French and German privates. Then we carried up to it a German officer, rather seriously wounded in the shoulder. He refused to be put with privates, demanded that he should have the wagon to himself. When we put him in he tried to kick us. Our French officer had to threaten him with the revolver. I really believe some of our men would have killed him if the French officer had not been standing by.

"So, day after day we retreated, bearing back the wounded, and hearing on all sides the bad news of German victories. And at last the pulling and straining in Alsace ceased; the sector remained quiet. And I, still with no news from my wife, was sent to the trenches in Arras."

Then Madame D—— took up the tale, her voice as restrained as her husband's had been.

"After my husband had gone I did what I

could in the parish, but there was little I could do. What comfort I could give to the wives of the men who had gone I gave. I took all the money and papers belonging to the church, ready, in case anything happened, to give them to the chief vestryman. But we did not think anything could really happen. We did not dream of invasion.

"What war news we read really told us little. I heard nothing of my husband; the other women heard nothing of their husbands and sons. We all assumed that our soldiers would soon be victorious, that the war would be over by the New Year. We waited.

"On the twenty-fifth of August, at about eight in the morning, I was giving the three children their breakfast, when some French soldiers appeared in my garden. How weary the poor fellows were, how dusty and distraught! They had no officers, no horses, no food, nothing. They looked at the children, and one of them said,

"'You must go at once, madame, with your little ones. We are in full retreat from Condé. There has been a battle, and the French have been defeated. Of our particular companies there are only one hundred and fifty left; there were a thousand. Not one officer remains.'

"I gave them food and coffee, and went to the kitchen to prepare more, for I thought other tired soldiers would be coming. These men went off to St. Quentin, and then some English soldiers

appeared. They, too, had been in a battle and had been defeated. But they did not show it. They were clean and smiling. They had not suffered as our poor soldiers. All they asked for was water.

"They, too, told me to leave quickly, as the Germans would soon arrive. But how could I leave with the Frenchmen coming to me, hungry and exhausted! I sent my little six-year-old girl to the house of the vestryman with the church papers and the church money. I also sent the church silver. The brave little one; she made many journeys. Then, from eight until two I was serving the soldiers.

"At two o'clock the men who were there said to me,

"'But this is madness, madame. It is a matter of minutes now before the Germans come. You must go, if you are to get the last train to Paris.'

"I had been so busy that I had not had time to collect any clothing for myself or the children. I put on their hats and walked out of the house, leaving it just as it was. I had not even time to bring the photographs of the children. I had just thirty francs in my purse.

"There was a hay cart containing four families of peasants going to the train. They took me with them. So many people could not be persuaded to leave. The farmers wanted to look after their crops. The shopkeepers wanted to guard their goods. Others said that if the Ger-

mans did come it would not be for days. We went over a road parallel to one along which the English artillery were fighting a retreat. Sometimes our cart had to be put in a field while officers drove by, or soldiers marched by.

"When we reached the station the last train was about to leave, and the French soldiers who were there literally threw us into the luggage vans. We were packed in tight, and we had to be shut in during the journey. Usually it takes three hours; but this time it took thirteen. Whenever the train stopped at a station English soldiers took the children out and gave them water and chocolate.

"Among the people in the van were three girls and their little brother, whom I took under my care. They belonged to a family of position. They had two brothers at the front, as well as the fiancé of the eldest daughter. The parents would have come with them, except that the old grandfather was too ill to move. The parents had given the girls a thousand francs, all the money they had in the house, and had sent them to Paris. They thought the money would last till the war was over!

"Those girls were very sad, but they did not know what was before them. They had never done any work, never had any deprivations, never had any grief. For months they were in suspense about their people, hearing nothing. At last the fiancé and one brother were taken prisoners.

Through them the girls learned that the other brother had been wounded, and that their father and mother had been badly treated. When the Germans entered the house they demanded food of the mother. They held a revolver to the old grandfather's head, and said they would shoot him dead if she did not work quickly enough. While she was killing all the fowls she had, and baking cakes for them, they beat the husband black and blue. The couple thought the terror would surely kill the old grandfather, but he is better than he has been for years. Meantime, the three girls and their brother are half starving on their allowance of twenty-five cents a day each.

"To go back to my own story. I arrived in Paris, with hordes of other refugees; but the German troops were drawing near Paris, so after two days they sent us south. The misery of that travel! We had nothing, and the weariness and terror made my children ill. My little girl was old enough to understand; the shock reacted on her delicate body. She grew more and more ill. Then I decided to go back to Paris, where I had friends. But it was too late for my little one. She died.

"In Paris I took a little house, and kind people gave me things. Still I heard nothing of my husband. But I had to think of our parishioners, of those poor boys in the trenches, whose homes had been taken by the Germans, who knew nothing of their families. I wrote to the proper quarters,

and found out where this and that soldier was, until I had addresses which would reach them all. Then, every week I sent each a letter. I typewrote for them passages from my husband's sermons. Later on, when he got to Arras, he sent me a sermon every week, and I copied it for all the men. When they get their *permissions* they come here to us. They kiss us as if we were their parents. They are so glad to find my husband."

Madame C—— again looked at her husband proudly.

"They are glad to talk to me about their families," he said. "My wife and I are the nearest thing to home that they have. They talk of their hopes for the days after war. I think they have a deeper religious feeling even than they had. If they live they will make their lives count for righteousness. They long for life and for victory. And they are hopeful. They believe that in a few months now the war will end."

The story that follows I give, despite its length and detail, because it is characteristic not only of the speaker, but of her class. Madame B—— is of the small shop-keeping class; her husband was a commercial traveller. At the time the war broke out they were living in Rheims. She is good-looking, vivid, practical, shrewd, voluble, a little excitable, and full of energy which she gives the effect of holding in suspension, until the war shall end.

"On the first of August, 1914, at seven o'clock," she said, "my husband came back to our home in Rheims from the tour he had been making in the Marne, the Aisne, and the Ardennes. Leaving him in charge of the two children, Paulette, aged six, and Violette, aged seven months, I went out. Arriving at the corner of the Faubourg Ceres, I heard the sound of a drum. There was something menacing in the sound. Like all the others, I ran to the barracks. It was the announcement of the general mobilization of our soldiers.

"What a scene! To me it was like a thunderbolt. The men were quiet, but the women wept, crying,

"'It's war! War!'

"I saw my brother-in-law and his wife. He said to me,

"'Is Louis back? When is he going? He is mobilized, of course.'

"Louis! I had not thought of that. Half mad, I ran home. But as I entered the house, and saw my husband playing with the children, I restrained my tears. 'You heard the drum?' 'No, why?' 'It's war.' He leaped to his feet. 'War?' 'Yes, they have called a general mobilization. They are putting up the placards which give the details.'

"I began to weep, and to embrace my little girls. The elder wept with me. My husband tried to console me.

"'Mobilization does not necessarily mean war,' he said. 'Perhaps it is done by way of precaution. In any case, I must go to the barracks before noon and ask for a couple of days of grace.'

"In a few days my husband was mobilized, but I did not have to part from him at once because his regiment was to stay in Rheims to guard the forts. This gave me time to get used to the thought of our separation. He would not be going immediately into danger, and that the Germans might come to Rheims never entered my head. Besides, I thought the war could only last a few months.

"The soldiers marched away from Rheims, singing and shouting, 'To Berlin!' We took courage; some people still wept, but more were resigned, and we all had confidence in our soldiers who had gone away so bravely.

"Towards the end of August various refugees from Belgium and from the Ardennes passed through Rheims on their way to Paris. Poor people, leaving their homes, bringing with them children and old parents, not knowing what the future would have in store for them, — we wept for them, little thinking that some day we should be in like case. About this time my husband was obliged to go to the fort at ——. Hearing that the Germans were at ——, he advised us to go away, because he wanted to feel certain that we were safe. Already we heard such terrible things of the Germans, — that they were without pity

for women and children, that we should have everything to fear from them. My father and mother wanted me to go with the children and with my sister. I wanted them to come, too, but they said that old people had nothing to fear. When, by September the second, we heard that the Germans would reach us in two days, my mother entreated me to go for the sake of the children.

" I agreed to go at three o'clock that afternoon, taking my sister with me. Many terrified people were at the station to take the train to Epernay. It was half past ten when we arrived, and there was no train for Troyes, where we meant to go. There was no hotel open where we could pass the night, no place where we could buy food. We had a cousin there with whom we had been on bad terms for a long time. We went to her house just the same; it was war and we were hungry; she would not close the door on us. Indeed, she received us well and gave us of her best. Next day at three o'clock we went to the train. It was not to start till nine, could take only sixty passengers, and four thousand were waiting for it! Oh, that waiting in the station under a burning sun. The children were ill! My Paulette nearly fainted with fear and weariness and fever. My sister carried her out in the air and revived her. My cousin and her son, a boy of seventeen, begged us to come back to their house.

" Then what did we see! Germans coming in

with a flag of truce to Epernay, their eyes bandaged! The crowd rushed upon their automobile. But a French officer standing in their car threatened the people with his sword. They cried, 'Kill them.' Oh, that terrible cry, and our own soldiers leaping from the windows of the station! The car was forced to go back. We returned with my cousin for something to eat. My sister wanted to stay, but I thought we should go. We waited till four o'clock and then we set out on foot for Troyes.

"My baby was in her carriage and was comfortable. But Paulette had to walk. She did not complain, but we could see that she was afraid of all that she had heard about these barbarians. The road was black with people, bound for Troyes. We walked on and on, but then we had to stop, for the news met us that the Germans were on our side of the road, the French in ambuscade on the other, and that presently we should be between two fires. What was going on in the midst of those innocent fields and vines at which we looked! We had to go back to Epernay and to our cousin.

"Next morning we heard that the Germans were at hand. All along I had been thinking how my baby had not been baptized. We had been waiting for my sister's fiancé to come back from his military service for the ceremony. But now I determined to wait no longer, and I found a priest who would baptize Violette. What a sad

baptism! Where was my husband? Where was my sister's fiancé? For all we knew, they might be only a few miles from us, but separated by the hordes of our enemies bearing down upon us. My sister was the godmother. Hardly was the ceremony finished before we heard loud music. It was the Germans, chanting their victory. But we wept at that music, for it meant that all those Germans were going to fight against and perhaps kill our dear soldiers. For the first time we seemed to understand what war meant.

"The mayor of Epernay passed through the streets to reassure the people. He told us to do nothing and say nothing and then we should have nothing to fear. A German officer then came and ordered us to keep our doors wide open. We could hear firing outside the town. Some civilians were killed and some made prisoners. We heard all sorts of rumors, — that the Germans were killing those who resisted them; that Rheims was being bombarded.

"We wished we were back in Rheims. What was the use of having come to see the Boches at Epernay when we could just as well have seen them at Rheims? And what had become of our dear parents! My sister reproached me for having blundered and I told her that if she had made up her mind quickly we should have been far away from Epernay by this time.

"Four days later we had to pass among a group of Germans. We were afraid of them. They

smiled at us. One of them invited me to mount up beside him on his horse and said, 'Pretty Frenchwoman.' Another offered us bread, horrible black bread. My young cousin pushed it away, saying, 'I 'll never eat that stuff!' The German turned on him with furious eyes and threatened him. To calm the German I took the bread and gave a bit to my little girl and told him it was good. That contented him and he went on his way. 'Yes,' I thought, 'go on your way. I 've seen enough of you.' We had to expostulate with our cousin, but he would not listen to anything, saying that he wanted to see the Germans get out, and that he 'd like to take them to Berlin with our soldiers.

"It seemed that someone, concealed in the grape vines, had fired a shot at the Germans, and for that the city was obliged to pay a big sum in gold. The authorities had much ado to find it. Further, the Germans requisitioned food for themselves and their horses. By and by the city grew quieter, and people began to appear in the streets.

"I went with Paulette into a store. A German, about forty years old, was there. As he passed out he patted Paulette's head. She recoiled and grew pale. He looked at her sadly and said,

"'Don't be afraid. I would n't hurt you. I have four little children at Berlin, ten, seven, four, and one they are. I want to see them again. I shall feel foolish in Paris.'

"He was certainly not wicked, thinking as he was of his children, whom he hoped to see again. If all the Germans had been like that one there would have been fewer little victims.

"On this same day we heard that the Germans were leaving free the country towards Rheims. We went to the *Mairie* for permission to go, and a German captain gave it to us. At nine next morning we thanked our cousin for her kindness to us, and took the road that led to Rheims. We had two carriages this time, that Paulette might be less weary. We had over twenty miles to go. We stopped only for a quarter of an hour once to eat. All along the road we passed troop after troop of the Germans, but these men did not sing. They looked wretched, more like animals than men. They had not the air of conquerors like the first ones we saw. But even the first ones, for all that they were strong and tall, did not have the spirit and *chic* of our Frenchmen. The soldiers we passed were going to help their comrades in what has since been called the battle of the Marne.

"At about half past two we saw Rheims. There rose up the towers of the Cathedral. In the suburbs people asked us whence we had come, and if we knew anything of how the battle was going. We did not doubt that our troops had repulsed the enemy, but we could not be sure! We were told that Rheims had been bombarded a few days before and that several people had been

killed. We hurried; what if our dear parents had been hurt! But they were safe and well, and rejoiced to see us.

"The next day we were so exhausted that we could scarcely move, and Paulette had a fever, but the day after I went out to see what was happening, and to buy some things I needed. As I had a good way to go I took my bicycle. I was near the northern end of the city, and far from home, when I almost ran into a drove of Germans. They were entering Rheims! What to do! As best I could I turned! I hurried. I should have flown if I could. The soldiers ran after me, and shouted something I did not understand. I shouted, 'Don't stop me, please.' A big Boche ran after me, but pretty soon he was obliged to stop, his companions laughing at him. I assure you I did not laugh. I rode like the wind, and suddenly in front of me I saw another group of German soldiers. I had either to get off the bicycle or ride among them. But the street was down hill and I was going furiously. I rang my bell loudly to show I wanted room to pass. I hit one of the Germans, but I did not fall off. He groaned loudly; but on I went, turned a corner, and, in fine, got home at last.

"So then the Germans were in Rheims. Let me say that I saw no signs of atrocities committed in Rheims, though I heard of many as happening in neighboring regions. In Rheims the Germans only robbed, particularly in the

houses from which the people had fled. They took everything to Germany, from dishes to champagne, from personal property to biscuits.

"Next day and the next we heard guns near at hand, and we hoped we were to be delivered. We believed that a battle was going on at our very gates. It came nearer. What if the Germans should be the victors? What if there should be fighting in the streets? There came companies of German artillerymen and infantrymen who had lost their way. They asked the road to Presnes, Neuchâtel, and Vitry, threatening with their revolvers those who did not wish to reply. A Uhlan officer asked a little boy the way to the Pierquin farm. The child said he did not know. The German pushed the revolver up against the little one's face. He was about to answer by guess when a young man indicated the route. The Boche made him march with them.

"Towards night the firing stopped. Next day I heard troops passing. I looked out. What joy! They were French. Rheims was retaken! We had many German prisoners. Our brave little soldiers were very tired and hungry. We fed them; we embraced them; we laughed, and we cried, and we questioned them about this and that regiment. Paulette cried with disappointment, for, on seeing these soldiers, she thought she would see her father. Alas, I did not know where he was.

"On the fourteenth of September, while we

were at table, a great noise made us leap to our feet. A shell fell in a factory across the road from us, which was being used as a hospital. Seventy wounded men were there. We heard them calling, and we ran out to help them, my sister and I being the first ones in the street. What a horrible spectacle! A white-clad nurse red with her own blood. Men who had had slight wounds now with limbs gone! Twenty-one dead. I shall always see that horror! We put those still alive in an ambulance, and a few minutes later that, too, was bombarded.

"My poor Paulette. She had seen it all. She kept crying, 'They will kill my papa, those terrible Boches.' We ran to an alley while the bombardment went on, knocking down houses, killing old men, women, and children. Day after day the bombardments continued. We went to a safe quarter of the town, but oh, the misery of seeing the ruins, of seeing the flames from our burning Cathedral. Soon it was hard to get food. We had to stand in line for hours. Then we began to lack money.

"My sister went to Epernay to sell something, but when she had accomplished this she fell ill. After a month she was better, but her money was gone. She asked permission to go back to Rheims. It was refused. So at night she slipped back across the fields.

"We talked of going away, but my father had become paralyzed. He said we should have to

leave him behind. What an anguish of choice. I wanted to stay with him, but I was afraid, and I wanted to save my children. The baby, Violette, was happy. She laughed at the sound of the shells, and cried, 'Boum!' But Paulette understood. She never complained, but she could not eat. She was sick from fear.

"One night when I was out with Paulette we heard a great bombardment in the direction of the home of my parents. Paulette became half mad, screaming that they were killed. Later my mother came to reassure the child. Next day I was knocked down by a shell. When I arose I was standing among fourteen women and children, all dead. I got home more dead than alive. Always bombarded; Paulette sick; it was enough; we must go. We applied for permits to leave Rheims.

"When we set out, shells were falling everywhere, and there was an artillery duel between our soldiers and the Germans. Paulette was half insane, but Violette laughed and held out her arms to the moon. Suddenly a shell crashed down and I saw Paulette fall. I ran to her and picked her up. She was covered with dust, but she had no wound. She screamed horribly, and then became unconscious. It was two hours before I could revive her.

"Somehow I got a carriage. We put in my paralyzed father and my mother, who was sick with a terrible cold. We wrapped her in a quilt.

My sister took care of one child and I the other. We drove to Bezamere to get the train to Paris. We had to stay in it all night and then change cars. How we did it I shall never know, with two helpless old people, two children, and a valise. Such misery — and hours later, Paris, and the kind ladies of the Red Cross to help us.

"And this is what the Germans have done to us: they have driven us from our home; my mother is sick; my father is sick; my Paulette is so ill that she has had to be taken to a sanitarium. My husband has been twice in the hospital, the second time with a very bad wound, and my sister's fiancé is killed. We can only wait for victory, and for the end of this accursed war."

CHAPTER XIV

The Little Autobiographies

I GIVE you the stories of these children as they told them to me or wrote them for me, — little refugees whose homes were suddenly changed from places of peace and safety to places of blood and terror. Good people have done their best for these little ones, but a child's life cannot fail to be deeply scarred by the loss of home, of father, perhaps of mother; of separation from brothers and sisters and from old associations. Despite the most exquisite tenderness and care it has taken more than three years to soothe the look of fear from the eyes of the little refugees, though, fortunately, the faith of young children and their trust in life is strong. But often, when a child is playing, a sudden noise, or perhaps the flash of sunlight on some bright object, will make it stop short with a gasp of terror. Old horrors spring out upon it and it rushes to its mother or to some teacher or playmate to make sure it is in unconquered France, — safe. I have seen thousands of such children whom France is rearing for the new nation, hundreds of them weakened by exposure and shock, all of them precious, each of them a convincing argument against any future war.

I HAVE SEEN THOUSANDS OF SUCH CHILDREN WHOM FRANCE IS REARING FOR THE NEW NATION

These children will often talk freely about their experiences to their playmates and teachers, and even to a stranger. The autobiography of a child is always touching — perhaps because we elders find something odd and innocent in a little one's sense of values. But no autobiography can be so poignant as that of a child that has lost, by violence, its home.

Little seven-year-old Simone told me her story in a large light workroom in Paris, where her mother, with many other women, was sewing on soldiers' clothes to supplement her state allowance of twenty-five cents a day for herself, and ten cents for Simone. Children were not always allowed in the workroom, but the mother needed the comfort of the little girl's nearness. The woman was dark, with bright mournful eyes, but the child's hair was yellow, and her eyes blue and translucent. Simone sat on my lap with her arm uncomfortably tight about my neck.

"Simone, you will choke madame," her mother said, lifting her mournful eyes from her work. "Since the Germans came Simone holds one very tight."

"You were not afraid, Simone, when the Germans came?" I asked.

"No, madame," Simone replied, "because mamma held my hand, so I knew nothing could hurt me."

Many of the smallest French and Belgian refu-

gees say that: "I was safe because I was with mamma."

"We had a pretty house," Simone chattered, her fair head on my shoulder. "Papa and mamma and I lived in it and the bird and the dog. We had a garden for me to play in. The bird's cage hung on a nail beside the window, and he watched me running after the dog. My papa used to play with me, but one day he had to go away to fight. We saw him go to the train with the other soldiers, and they were all singing. The dog liked to stay with papa and whined when he went away, and used to go to the door and look down the street to see if papa would not come back. But afterwards he played with me. To-morrow I will write a letter to papa."

The face of Simone's mother contracted in a tragic spasm and she turned away her head, while heavy tears fell on her work. That to-morrow will be put off for Simone until she ceases to speak of her father. He died on the Somme for France, and Simone will never carry a bead wreath to his grave. The machine whirred fiercely under the trembling hands of Simone's mother, and the child said,

"Great noises came, and that was the Germans, and one day mamma said, 'You must not play any longer in the garden,' and then she said, 'You must come and sleep in the cellar.' Did you ever sleep in a cellar, madame?"

"No, Simone."

"I did not like it in the cellar. It was always dark even when there was the sun outside. One day mamma woke me, and it was dark. She said, 'Come, we must go.' She dressed me, and we went out in the street, and there was still the big noise and houses falling down. Mamma locked the door and she said, 'We are going away for a long time,' and I said, 'What will the bird and the dog do?' So mamma opened the door of the cage and she said perhaps he would fly out when it was sunlight. The dog came with us but we lost him."

Simone's mother made a gesture which meant that the dog had been killed.

"The street was full of fallen houses and wounded people," she whispered rapidly; "Simone walked with her head under my shawl."

"Mamma said I walked well, but it was so far," Simone said.

"She walked fifty miles; we were in the Argonne region," Simone's mother explained.

"That is why I wear this," said the child, pointing to an imitation *croix de guerre* on her breast, "and because I am a good girl always now."

I made the conventional response of the perfect adult, and Simone went on,

"Madame, there are little girls here who looked back at their houses and they had all fallen down. It is very sad that so many people will have no houses to go to when the Germans are driven out of our country. But our house will be

there. Do you know why it will be there, madame? Because mamma has the key in her pocket."

In one of the four little Montessori schools established and supported in Paris by Miss May Cromwell of New York as her contribution to France, I found a group of little French and Belgian children, anxious to chatter of their experiences. The small mother of the class, fat, blonde Madeleine Mahière of Popernighe, Belgium, leaned against me on one side, while on the other leaned Marcel Houard of Arras.

"Do you like it in France, Madeleine?"

"Belgium was better till the Germans came," she said. "We did not think they would come so soon. My grandmother was old and my aunt was sick, and my father was at the war and my mother had six children. My mother said, 'Some of these children cannot walk at all, and none of them can walk far. I do not think the Germans will come yet.'"

"But they did come," said Marcel Houard, "and I saw a big Boche that —"

Madeleine calmly raised her voice to show that she was against any invasion of her conversation.

"My mother got up early one day to make cakes," she continued, "and soon she came to wake us and said that we must hurry away for the Germans were coming. We heard so much shooting and we were afraid. Grandmother

cried, and said why did the good God make an old woman live through two wars. My aunt was wrapping up food to take. And oh, madame, there was no time to eat any of the cakes, and my aunt forgot to take them out of the oven and so they were left behind."

Madeleine mourned for a moment over the cakes, and then said,

"When we got into the street my mother carried the two youngest, and put us in front of her, and the shells were all falling. I heard my grandmother scream, and my mother said to me, 'Don't look behind,' but I did look behind and grandmother was lying on the ground with her hand on her knee, and my aunt's face was all covered with blood, and she was on the ground too, only she did not scream. My mother said we could not wait for them. So when we got to the little trenches our soldiers had made we walked in them. I carried my doll and held my little brother's hand. We had nothing to eat, for my grandmother and aunt had all the food and they did not come. I don't know where they are. We were tired and we all cried. So then we got into a train and the baby died. And oh, madame, on the train I broke my doll, and mamma made me throw it away."

"Me," cried Marcel, seizing his turn, "we lived in Arras for more than a year in the cellar. All our window-glass was broken. We would go down and undress in the cellar and go to bed there,

and we ate there. I had a little piano I played with. The Boches have it now."

"Did you have plenty to eat, Marcel?"

"Meat and potatoes and salad, and it was cold in the cellar, and one day the house fell down. So we went to Rheims and lived in another cellar. I went to school in a cellar too. In the cellar in Rheims where I slept, my mother let me keep my rabbits. But one of them was killed."

"How was your rabbit killed, Marcel?"

Marcel was busy moulding clay into a basket shape, but he stopped to gesticulate.

"I let him go into the street to play — so. And a shell came — so. There was a man walking along the street and he heard a shell and he said, 'That is not mine.' But it was his, and he was killed. The shell killed a woman and my rabbit. The French soldiers came and took the woman away in a wheelbarrow, but they left my rabbit. I ran out to get it and we had to eat it for supper. There were many dead horses, but no one ate them."

A chorus of little voices began to talk of the dead horses, — grotesque and merciful it is that they have scant realization of the meaning of death to human beings. Ten-year-old Cêcile had been listening to the smaller children with an indulgent superior air.

"I," she said, "it is I who have spoken to the Boches. I, too, was in Rheims, but in our quarter of the city we were not afraid of the bombs.

Scarcely more than five fell in our quarter, but we slept outdoors in front of our house. Then one fell in the street and did a good deal of damage; so then we went into the cellar, and all the time the barbarous Germans were shelling our beautiful Cathedral. Then the Germans came into the city, and they stood in front of our houses, and when we wanted to go out to buy food they would not let us."

"Sensible little girls stay indoors when the Germans have come," said Madeleine, firmly.

"My little sister and I," pursued Cécile, serenely, "we went among them to see what they were like. Some of them were nice and some of them were wicked. One day I went for a walk and a German called to me. He spoke to me in his own language and I did not understand a word he said. I think he wanted me to make him some coffee. But I am afraid of going among strangers whom I do not know. So I ran away, but he ran after me to kill me, I think. He caught me at the end of the railway, but I cried as loud as I could, 'Mamma, come and help me!' Then the German gave me a hard box on the ear and let me go. After that some bombs fell in our street. Our poor neighbor was going out to buy bread and a bomb hurt her; she fell down beside a house that was half in ruins. We lifted her up and went with her to the hospital, and two days later she died."

"If people would stay in the houses they would

not get boxes on the ears and they would not get hit with bombs," said Madeleine, primly.

"Me — I like to see what goes on," Cécile rejoined. "Sometimes the German aeroplanes came over the city; then the people hid among the trees and looked up at them and so did I, and I am still alive. That same day we made a swing, and the rope broke; but we were able to mend it."

"We have a swing, madame," said Marcel, "and toys, too; see, madame!"

Well for the little ones that they can be diverted easily, and that they do not understand all they have lost. When older children write of their experiences their sense of proportion seems less grotesque. The effect is very definitely seen, too, of the life to which they have been transplanted and of the teaching of the nuns. But whoever reads sympathetically between the lines will see the deep traces of ineradicable fear, of human losses for which no tenderest fostering can ever quite atone.

The following autobiographies were written by children from various parts of Belgium and France, aged from nine to thirteen years, most of them now in a refuge at Nemours, supported by Mrs. Francis Shaw of Boston, who ever since the war began has given devoted service to France.

"My Life During the War," by A. Ceiche, aged eleven.

"I lived at Nazelle when war was declared. We have all suffered so much since then. I saw

the soldiers in the trains the day they left, and they were all singing; but I have not heard them singing any more since that day. Some of them will never come back. My brothers all went away to the war, and one of them is dead. I have another brother who had bronchitis, but he had to go back. He told me that the bullets sang in his ears. I have another brother whose feet were frozen, but he went back to the front, too, because he did not have them cut off. I have a sister whom I shall never see again because she was pitchforked by the Germans and also her two little children, aged five and two-and-a-half years. Her husband is a Belgian. I am very unhappy at having had to leave my parents and come here for they have had so much trouble. I have a sister from whom I have not heard since the war began. We used to be very happy at Nizelles. When I had to leave the good sisters took care of me. I hope I shall see my father and mother again. I hope my brothers will come back in good health from the war and that I shall see them again. I pray to the good Jesus for them. They are very kind to me here at Nemours. I pray for them and I love them very much."

Time has not done very much for that sad little boy nor for the little girl whose history follows:

"My Life During the War," by Gabrielle Fouquet, aged twelve.

"On the first of September, 1914, we left our house because the Germans were coming, and we

left without being able to take anything with us. We took refuge wherever we could, and often people refused to give us lodging. And we went as far as Croyes, and when the Prussians invaded there we went to the district near by to see if we could find work. I went always to school, and when I got home I would help mamma, and when she fell sick I helped my sister, and when she went out on an errand I took care of mamma, and when she was thirsty I made her a hot drink, and I worked a little for the lady in whose house we stayed. When mamma died I was very sad because she was good to us. And when papa saw that we were all alone and that he could not find any more work there, we went far away to another district, and papa placed me with a hosier and he put my sister in another place, and he took care of my brother. I went always to school, and when there was no school I found herbs for the rabbits and after that I played. On Sundays I could see my sister, who was a maid in the neighboring country. One day we got a letter that papa was dead. That made me very unhappy. Then some American ladies came, and they went to see the lady who kept the school, and she spoke to them about me. One day I went to see my sister and she told me that I was to be taken away. When she said that I cried, because I was sad at not having my parents any more, and now they were taking me away from her. She said that the ladies had asked her if she wanted me to go,

and she said she did because they told her I should be left with the sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, who were very kind. I was very sad when I left my sister, but since I have come here I have not been sad for the sisters are so kind. They teach us how to work, and we go for walks among the rocks, for there are plenty of rocks where I am now.

"God has been good to shelter me from want. I thank from the bottom of my heart the people he has chosen to replace my dear parents, and, above all, Madame Shaw, who is so good to us."

Little Marie Guirard, aged nine, plunges into the middle of her autobiography.

"It was terrible to have to leave our poor Saint Mihiel! It was in September the twenty-fourth, 1914. We went to the train where many people had already taken their tickets. Mamma was holding out her hand for her ticket, when all at once two aeroplanes appeared. They dropped bombs on the gas plant and on the railway station. The gas plant fell down. There was a poor man who cried out, 'Save yourselves if you can,' and he pointed out the road. A poor little boy had his hand cut by a piece of shell, and he cried, 'Mamma! Mamma!' Mamma looked to see if it was one of us. When we got on the road we saw the guns firing upon the Germans. We could scarcely make a step along the road without coming on a dead body. We went to another place where there was a train, but they told us that train

was not for refugees but for soldiers. Then we walked almost a mile under bombardment to another place, where we stayed. My uncle had written us that we must come to Paris. After a time we got to Paris. There was a very good lady who was kind to us and she asked the committee if I could go to the country. I thank the committee for taking me to the country and the nuns who have been so good to me. I ought to be very obedient and not cry, for it would trouble my mother and my father, and my good benefactress, Madame Shaw, if I were not a good girl, and also the mother superior and my teachers. So I am going to be good always so as not to trouble them, and I am very grateful to them."

Good little children who nearly always remember their manners! Germaine Desmedt, aged ten, forgets hers in her eagerness to talk of her brothers.

"I have five brothers who went to war. There is one who disappeared the fourth of August and one who is a prisoner in Germany and one who is at Verdun. He got a bullet in his stomach. There is one who was in Serbia, and he wrote that he did not see how he was going to stand the hot weather. When war was declared I went to live at my aunt's house. But the Germans came there, and they killed a little girl because she said, 'Down with the Germans!' But the English came and made the Germans go away. We gave coffee to the English and they stay there now.

We went to Paris, and in Paris they put me in a house that was for all the refugees. I stayed there eight days. Then we went away and got a room for five francs. Afterwards my sister and my grandmother came and got a room and they paid six francs. Then I had to leave mamma and go, with my little brother Baptiste, to Lyons."

"When the war broke out," writes Henriette Pouyard, aged thirteen, "I was in boarding-school at Puteaux. I was playing in the highest of spirits at the moment when they told me that war was declared. I cried and was unhappy because the next Sunday papa came to tell me good-bye, saying that he had to go to the front. On December the twenty-fifth was the great battle of the Marne. Papa was in it and the Boches cut his right leg, and I have an uncle who was missing and another who was wounded three times. When I was in the rue Bobillot one Wednesday at three o'clock, there was a manufactory in the next street making shells. Some shells were in a wagon, and one of them became displaced and made all the others burst. The factory burned, and they took me away to the *crèche*. I was playing in the court of the *crèche* with some little ones, when all at once I heard a loud noise. A little girl and I looked up and we saw tiles falling. A piece of glass fell on that little girl's head, but nothing hit me. I got the little ones and we all ran into the *crèche* to see if there was anyone hurt there. The school was nearly burned down and

some of the children were wounded. All the wounded people were taken to a hospital and to the pharmacy, and there were many dead in the streets, and all the glass was broken in the rue Bobillot up as far as the Place d'Italie, to say nothing of the other streets. There was plenty of damage done. Two officers picked up a shell and then let it fall; it burst before their eyes and killed them. I was afraid the night after this. Now I am happy because of the ladies and sisters who take care of me as if I were their own child, and I am especially happy since I came to Nemours. I have everything I want and I thank you for your kindness to me."

Evidently little G. Loth has found it necessary to remind his little companions of the advantages of his nationality, for he begins,

"I love best of all the Belgian flag for that is the flag of my own country. I was in Belgium when the war broke out. My father and mother are dead. The good Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul took me to the train, for we wanted to get away from the bombardment. But there were Germans there, and one of them put his sabre at my throat and I was afraid. The nuns then took us to a house and there were more than a hundred children. All night long the Germans passed and they kept knocking at our door so that we had to go down to the cellar in our bare feet. The Belgian flag was floating, and when the Germans saw it they were angry and they yelled.

Many of the children in the house became sick because they were afraid of the cannon. I wish I could have news of my sister. I have heard nothing from her at all, and I should like to be able to write her a few tender words. She had to have her first communion in black because my parents were dead. Her name is Suzanne. There was a little Belgian girl who saw her brother among the soldiers, and she cried and cried, and he cried too, and said, ' I shall see you again, my dear little girl; do not cry.' We went to Paris, and I stayed with my aunt for a long time, till she sent me here. I forgot to tell you that when the French soldiers went by they told us if any Germans came there we were to pull their ears. But they have burned down that house I used to live in, and I do not know where I shall go after the war is over. We went to Nazelle for Christmas, and they gave us a big box of chocolate bonbons. I am always praying for the war to be finished and that I may never see the Boches again, for they have a fierce and wicked manner. May God protect the poor emigrant children of the War of 1914, and reward the charitable people who take care of us, the sisters, and Madame Shaw, our benefactress, who comes to see us often and always brings us something. Many children are not so fortunate as we are."

Follows another little story of the bombardment of Rheims, by Marcelles Landes, aged twelve.

"The day of mobilization all the soldiers went away singing. When it was my papa's turn everyone wept with us for him as they did also for my uncle. Then things went quietly enough, until one day when we heard that the Prussians were entering Rheims. I was at the house of our employer when I saw many people coming, as mamma was, to call their children. We hurried away, and at the same moment we saw a band of Prussians coming with their revolvers held ready to fire at anyone who said anything. The next day there was new terror, for we heard a strange whistling, and then we saw that there was fire in the English factory. The work people came out, crying, 'Hide yourselves; it is the bombs.' After the bombardment we ran out, for we scarcely understood what had happened, and then we saw fallen houses and wounded people weltering in their blood.

"One day we rushed out into the street to find everybody shouting, 'The French! Ours! Quick!' Indeed, it was the French soldiers who drove away the Prussians. Unfortunately they stopped at Cernay, and for a long time now they have bombarded us and our Cathedral. We also heard of the death of my papa, which caused us the greatest sorrow. Then grandmother said that we had better go away; that it was no longer prudent to remain. Then mamma took me to register. Then we went to Châlons, and then to Paris to the sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, who received

us very kindly. Then we went to Nemours, where we were also received kindly, and were well dressed and well cared for. The first few days I was very sad in thinking of Rheims with its beautiful sunshine and its beautiful seasons, and of my games with my little friends, and of mamma, who loved me so much that she always gave me as much pleasure as she could. But now I am used to seeing these good sisters replacing my mother, and I am very grateful to them for devoting themselves to the care of us. I should also be very grateful to the Society which saved me from the bombardment of Rheims.

" Such is my life during this accursed war."

Another twelve-year-old, Genevieve Barbier, writes uniquely, as follows:

" I have the honor to tell you the story of my life since the day when war was declared by France. The declaration came the first of August; then came the general mobilization. On that day we were still in Rheims. The next evening, in bad weather, the regiments went away, infantry and cavalry, to prevent the invader from advancing upon our sacred soil! All the nervous people were trembling! The next Sunday papa got orders to rejoin his regiment in the Aisne. The days succeeded each other; week followed week without any orders, without any news! We were astounded to see Rheims, that city once so lively with the noise of motors and carriages, now so quiet — shall I say dull?

"The afternoon of September the twenty-second, I and my little sisters were dressing our dolls when we heard a great ringing. At the sound men, women, and children ran out and waited for the news. All the mobilized men were to go that evening, by order of the mayor, to the Colbert barracks. That same night papa came back, having accomplished the mission upon which he had been sent. All the men of Rheims who could were ordered to join the infantry to fight against the accursed barbarians. Papa, though he wished to, could not join, being a cavalryman. On the twenty-fifth of September several people told us that the Germans were retreating through Epernay, a small city some distance from Rheims. What joy filled every heart! But, immediately after, we were told that two Prussian officers and their men had entered Rheims. The news previously announced was insignificant compared with this, but in spite of our mortification we had to accept it. Next morning at daybreak we saw bands of Prussians coming out of the various barracks. Their officers ordered a bombardment. The sound of the guns was an unknown noise to our citizens, frightening them. After the bombardment those barbarians said they had not meant it! For eight days they besieged the city. On the ninth the French soldiers made their triumphant entry into Rheims. The Germans could not find any free route by which to escape except through the woods. After their departure came a

second and continuous bombardment. Our quarter, that of the Faubourg Ceres, was very much exposed. We resolved to take refuge with some close friends in the quarter opposite. We stayed there for a good month. Then the bombardment attacked this quarter. Where were we to go? Where should we seek our way? The people we were with decided to leave Rheims and to put us with our aunt in Paris. Papa had been recalled; mamma was not able to travel with the four of us. It was decided to send us to Paris. We could either go on the train by way of Dormans to Paris, or we could walk as far as Epernay. We went by train, and it took six times as long as it does in times of peace. My uncle, who was sick, wept with joy to see us; so did my aunt. They had received no news of us since the bombardment, as it was impossible to write. We stayed with them more than a year. But the war lasted, and mamma was not able to take care of us because the cost of living had gone beyond all price. In spite of the sorrow of separation she had to give us to the sisters as refugee children. We have now no privations, and our life is very happy while we wait for the final victory, after which we shall again see our dear parents."

Genevieve's nine-year-old sister Odette writes:

" During the war I saw the Germans who came from the side near our quarter of the city. But they have done a great deal of damage. Everything is dear. Nearly everybody went away from

Rheims. There are many wounded on the battle-fields. It is necessary to pray for the Germans to go away from Rheims, and that I shall some-time find my dear parents who are so good to me. I pray for them and for the soldiers who died on the field of battle. We went to the Pommery cellars, sleeping on straw, and the Germans came nearer and nearer, and we were afraid that we should have to leave the cellars. During the night I could not sleep because I was afraid of the bombs that were always falling. The next day we got ready our luggage to go away as quickly as possible, but the bombs and machine-guns forced us back into the cellar. So we decided to go to Paris with our aunt, and since that time we have been always in Paris."

Helene Hureau, aged thirteen, has evidently been healed by time and by nature of any shock the war brought her.

"When hostilities began," she writes, "we lived in the smiling, gracious town of Vitry. The night of the first of August a great noise was heard in the town; it was the soldiers passing through and singing very loudly, for they were all glad to be fighting for their country. They were very warm, for they had come on foot from the barracks at Melun. All day long we were making preparations for them. It began to be hard to get food, especially food imported from the colonies, for the Germans with their submarines barred the route across the Mediterranean. It was the

third of August that we received a letter, or rather an order, announcing that papa must go away at once. This abrupt separation had the effect on me of a thunderbolt. Mamma cried, but papa, far from being cast down, went about his preparations. At luncheon time the table seemed so empty and everything was so sad.

" We went to Paris to the sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, and remained there two months. Then we went with the sisters to the little village of Nazelle, where we found a great deal of happiness. What I love in this village are the slopes and valleys and silent woods, and the big fountain to which every evening come the horses and cows and sheep. The horses come from their work and the cows and sheep from their pasturage. The walks were delightful, and I often sat down under the shadow of a big oak and listened to the birds singing, or, again, I looked at the beautiful nature about me, thinking that whatever the Divine Creator had made was well made; or sometimes I ran after the butterflies with their golden wings touched with little black points; or again, in the time of harvest we ran among the wheat to look for wild poppies and corn-flowers, and we made wreaths of red, white, and blue. We stayed here thirteen months, always happy, and then it was necessary to begin another life, no less advantageous, in Nemours, where I actually am now as I write these memoirs, and where the sisters take good care of us and love us."

It is the children and the soldiers that bring home to us most the fact that every man, woman, and child represents a drama, that homes and villages and forests have vanished like those cities of old that crumbled under the deep black seas about Land's End. In the place of happiness is a magnificent courage that will rebuild France. And if this present generation of France may never know joy again, only cheerfulness and bravery, it will be otherwise with the coming generation.

I wish that every child in France could be given the food, comfort, and happiness that is the heritage of little four-year-old Solange Perrin. When I saw him I could have built a shrine to him, covering it with spring flowers, letting loose upon it song birds, and flooding it with sunshine, for Solange has in himself the spirit of young France, — gay, charming, unafraid and happy in the present. As I entered his schoolroom he was singing most zestfully, "I love good tobacco!" He swung his limber body about and wagged his head, his mouth wide open, his eyes shining. He wore a blue pinafore, a tiny white cape, and a blue cap on the side of his head. His teacher set it straight two or three times, but it was clear that Solange's cap would, throughout his life, slip naturally to one side. When he marched he exaggerated all the motions; when he danced he threw in extra steps; when the children sang the Marseillaise it was Solange only who stamped his feet

at "Marchons!" — adorable, happy little French baby!

"My papa is not dead," Solange boasted proudly; "Armand's papa is dead but mine is only wounded."

"Where did you live before you came here, Solange?" I asked.

"Always here," he said.

Fortunate Solange to have forgotten that his mother carried him as she trudged weary miles from the Ardennes region. Happy little Solange who plays in the old garden of the priests in Saint-Barbe-des-Champs, unaware that he is a refugee, sure that each day is the only day, — but sometimes his mother looks through the magnificent old trees and sees a tiny house battered by German shells, and wonders if she will ever again enter her own home. May Solange be the forerunner of the new nation of French children who will have no memory of the horrors of war.

CHAPTER XV

In the Front-Line Trenches

"Ah, but madame," they said to me, at the Maison de la Presse, "we dare not send you into the front-line trenches before Rheims except on a day when there is no bombardment. One must wait."

So one waited; at first with confidence, later, when one discovered that the bombardments of Rheims averaged about two in three days, one felt a degree of uncertainty. But when I learned that Eleanor had at last gained permission to come, my confidence returned. For I knew that Eleanor's sunshine luck would hold.

Permission at last! Madame St. Marie-Perrin and I were already at Châlons. We drove down to Epernay to spend the night with Madame G——, a member of a family that for decades has been one of the chief wine-growers of the champagne country. We made our way along a coal-black street to a château looming darkly against the blue-black sky. Before us was a tall iron fence. Madame Perrin found the bell and rang. A silence, and then echoing steps in the courtyard. The tall gate slowly drew back, and an old withered *concierge* admitted us. We felt our way in the darkness. Suddenly a great oblong

of orange light signified to us that the door of the château had opened. We entered into a marble hall, twenty feet high. Statues stood in niches between tall windows. At the left was a wide marble staircase. Our hostess met us in a white and crimson drawing-room. The windows were at least fifteen feet high, draped in crimson velvet lambrequins. Many mirrors and rare old furniture were a fit setting to the charming French hospitality we received.

Madame G—— and her husband, a son home on leave, and his wife were our hosts. We talked of the hospital for which Madame G—— is doing so much work; of the rumors of a new offensive to be launched at Verdun; of madame's little grandchildren; of the wine-cellars, of the rue du Commerce, where the wine-houses are, of the great age of Epernay, which was given to the church of Rheims in the time of Clovis. Very peaceful and charming and domestic it all was, and it was strange to wake in the night and to hear, far off, the sound of a bombardment.

Next morning Madame Perrin and I went to the station to meet the Paris train. It was late, which distressed us, because we knew that every minute we delayed in Epernay shortened by just so much our stay in the front-line trenches. Inside the station were a very few people who had permits to leave Epernay, — women in black, little boys in long pinafores and cloaks. There were soldiers in blue, standing with their families, wait-

ing for the train that was to take them back to Verdun. To the enormous pack each carried had been added fresh-baked loaves of bread and a shining cup or basin, little final gifts from home. On a wall of the station was pasted the poster which has found so much favor in America, representing a poilu charging towards the enemy, shouting, "We 'll get them!" Under the words some satirist had written "cold feet!"

The two military motors arrived which were to take us to Rheims, and a small crowd of boys surrounded them, saluting, respectfully, the captain who was to have us in charge. A dark, radiant, handsome man he was, gallant, brilliant. He had served on many sectors, and had suffered greatly at Verdun, where, with a platoon of his men, he had been forced to lie for days in a shell-hole, wounded, without food or water, and seeing his soldiers shot, one after another. Almost at the same moment the train from Paris drew in, and among a surge of officers out stepped Eleanor, and the Spanish journalists who were to make up our party.

Eleanor and I drove together, a non-commissioned officer sitting beside our corporal-chauffeur. When we came to the outskirts of Epernay we saw why we needed the officer. A sentry stepped out of his tricolor box and stopped us with flashing bayonet. Eleanor looked impressed. Wishing to impress her further, I said, as one experienced in the war zone,

" He 's a territorial. They always put on more airs than a regular poilu."

The officer bent over and whispered the password. We listened shamelessly then, and each time a sentry stopped us on our way through a village, but we were never able to catch the word.

As we drew near Rheims we came to a stretch of road in full sight of the forts the Germans hold. On the east the road was screened to a height of twenty feet. Some of the screening was of burlap in the natural color; the rest of it was of saplings, tied together with barbed wire. The saplings had faded to a light brown. It made a good *camouflage*. Nevertheless, the chauffeur bowled very quickly along that stretch.

There were the towers of the Cathedral. At the distance of a mile the city looked quite unchanged. Inside, some streets seemed much as they were. Old men and women were seated in the doorways; children played on the sidewalks. But other streets were closed, and still others were long canyons of ruin.

The shell of the Cathedral rises from a ruined square. The Hotel of the Lion d'Or, opposite the Cathedral, shows a cream-colored façade, battered and pock-marked with shells. We were told that the shells fell first in the road, and then their fragments bounced up against the walls. The archbishop's palace, with its wonderful fifteenth-century chimney and its great salon where the coronation banquets were held, is now only a heap

of featureless wreckage. The little equestrian figure of Joan of Arc, before the western entrance of the Cathedral, is quite unhurt. The German shells seem unable to reach it. Now the figure carries in her hand a French flag, and the poilus have decorated it around the plinth with various tributes. They take it as a good omen that their saint is untouched.

Hundreds and hundreds of times the Germans have sent shells in the direction of the Cathedral. It has been their scapegoat. Whenever the French or British have gained notable success the Germans have punished Rheims. It is as if they wanted to make true the words Rudolf Herzog wrote in the *Berlin Lokalanzeiger,* January 1, 1915: "The bells sound no more in the double-towered dome. Finished is the benediction. We have closed with lead, O Rheims, thy house of idolatry." But those words can never be true. The Cathedral is indeed closed. In other bombarded towns the inhabitants may, if they choose, run to their church for sanctuary. Not so there. Yet this closing is not forever; the bells are silent, but they will speak on the final day of victory.

Sandbags are used to protect the Cathedral as much as possible, but great damage has been done. The wonderful figures on the façade have been broken. On the south side high holes have been torn in the walls. On the north side several gargoyles have been broken, and the little green enclosure beneath is full of fragments. Worst

of all, five of the flying buttresses have been seriously damaged; if three or four more should suffer equally, the Cathedral would fall into ruins. It is impossible for masons to repair them, for as soon as the Germans see them they begin to send over shells, accusing the men of being there for observation purposes.

The custodian unlocked for us a little door on the right-hand side of the west entrance, and we entered this great church, the coronation place of kings, once so rich in color, in subdued light, in warm incense. When we entered it was into a gray, desolate, lonely interior. No one may enter now (unless by special permission) except the archbishop, for whom a space has been reserved behind the high altar, where he may go to pray for his people. The vast silent interior is the home of doves. Their feathers lie thick on the floor, among the fallen stones and plaster. As we advanced, the soft creatures flew up in a fast cloud to the roof. Our captain looked up anxiously. Whenever the Germans see a flock of doves rising from the Cathedral it is the custom to send over a shell. But, apparently, this time they were not looking our way.

We turned to the famous stained-glass window, that great circle of rose and sapphire blue that was the wonder of the ages. A large part of it is fallen; the rest resisted so bravely, because it was set so long ago in the stout lead. The fallen glass is travelling over the world as souvenirs,

most of it set in the aluminum rings which the soldiers make in the trenches. We looked back at the high altar. It was covered, what was left of it, with a cloth. It looked strangely nondescript, shorn of its crucifix and candles and rich decorations. It was hard to believe that Clovis had been baptized here, the great Charlemagne crowned before the altar.

The walls seem curiously bare. Gone are the famous tapestries, safely hidden; gone the shrines and crucifixes, the stations of the cross, and the pictures. The ceiling with its blue ground, the silver fleur-de-lis, seems faded and stained; it is full of great holes. The light is leaden. There is no color, except the burnt blood on the stone pavement where the wounded Germans who had been carried in for safety were killed by their own incendiary bombs. It is said that the French do not mean to remove that stain.

Our captain guided us, speaking with passion of the desecrations. We went with him up and down the dark aisles, sharing his feelings. Presently the custodian began to tell us the history of the bombardments. He seemed to know the exact date and weight of every shell. Then he began to describe in detail his narrow escapes from various shells, leaping back realistically to show how he dodged them. I am by way of being a writer of fiction myself at times, and so I know it when I hear it. I went away by myself, and walked up and down the sounding nave.

And slowly my sense of gray desolation vanished. I felt as if the Cathedral were sentient. It was like some great soul that had suffered so much that all the grave joy it had known had turned to majestic endurance, stern resignation. Lofty, immobile, the spiritual symbol of the white flame of the French soul, — Rheims Cathedral is all that. And it cannot pass. Rudolf Herzog and the Germans are wrong. They may shatter it stone by stone, and still it will live. It is as deathless as the spirit of France.

Eleanor, good, thoughtful friend, came hurrying up to me.

"Come along!" she cried. "The custodian is giving us bits of the glass. Make haste, or all the blue will be gone!"

It was gone, but, having faith, I asked for more, and got it. The custodian gave it, with intent face. He stared at me a moment; then he gave me a piece of a shell. I took it; he knitted his brow. Then he gave me a piece of a gargoyle. I saw Eleanor fumbling in her purse, and old tourist associations rushed upon me. Of course: custodian, church, tips. I opened my purse. But I think if I had hesitated a little longer maybe the custodian would have given me a section of the roof.

We went out at last, and as we walked around the back of the Cathedral, on our way to the motor and luncheon, an old man and woman put their heads out of a window exactly like two

Jacks-in-a-box. They were so obviously eager to be spoken to that, in spite of our hunger, we questioned them. They had a happy five minutes, telling us of how often their house had been hit, and how, after sleeping uncomfortably in their cellar for days, they would decide to risk sleeping upstairs again, and then another shell would smash in their roof. Those old people certainly enjoyed their adventures. When Rheims is once more open to the world, with what immortal gusto will they tell their tales!

Our gallant captain entertained us at luncheon, and then took us to meet General Gouraud, famous for his exploits in Africa. He complimented Eleanor and me upon our bravery in going to the trenches. We smiled, modestly, with a flickering glance at each other; right well we knew that if he had thought a bombardment imminent he would have sent us flying in the motors back to Epernay.

At last we got again into the motors and rode northward. Eleanor and I hardly dared breathe for fear something would stop us. For, after all, Eleanor's luck did not invariably hold at its highest. We bowled along the wide road, overtaking motor-lorries and forage wagons. We passed one pedestrian, — a woman with a baby in her arms, and her gas mask hanging from her left hand. I wonder what she 'd have done about the baby's little face in case of a gas attack. As we drew nearer the trenches the road became lonelier. To

the right it was screened. On our left we passed trenches with barbed wire in front of them; they had been abandoned for many months.

At last the cars stopped abruptly by a great flat field. In it, far to the left, we saw a rough mound, or tall parapet, with a shed or two in front of it, and in front of them a number of soldiers. There was our objective. To reach it we had to go along a road thick with mud. The men were practicing throwing hand-grenades, but without releasing the pin that makes the mechanism explode. They threw them as cricketers do, swinging back until the right hand almost touched the ground, and then letting go in a beautiful long curve. A grenade is about as large as a turkey's egg, or a big lemon, brownish, with grooves down the sides. It feels harmless as one holds it, — that is, if one keeps one's imagination in leash.

There they were, those grenade throwers, grave, absorbed, not looking at us, intent on their practice of death. To the right of where they worked was a little soldier's graveyard, with its white crosses, all too new. For all we or they knew, a few hours later these soldiers might be throwing those same grenades into the German trenches. The methods of death seem so commonplace; it is the results that are so awful, of physical pain and spiritual grief. Poor little human race! Capable of contriving all these wonders of destruction, but not yet great enough in moral force to control them for all the world.

We turned from the men and looked at the long mound of earth. High up on it, perhaps twenty feet above the ground, and facing towards the German lines, was a little shed which was an observation house. A few feet below it, to the right, and connected with it, was a large bell, to be rung in case of danger of any sort, — chiefly a gas attack. To the right of that again, and lower down, was the headquarters of the chief officer. Here we entered. It was a tiny place for the conduct of the affairs of that little sector. Part of it had an iron roof, and under this was the officer's bed, a little table on which stood the telephoning apparatus and two stands made out of biscuit boxes, presumably for official papers. The rest of the room had an earthen roof, and under it were, on one side, a cheap toilet table, a chair, a set of shelves, and on the other side a little stove and a chair. That chilly little place contrasted forcibly with the magnificent château which I had left only a few hours before, similar to the home from which the officer had come.

This commanding officer had served, like our own captain guide, at Verdun, and like him had suffered at Verdun. Like him, too, and indeed like most of the French soldiers, he had seen service in several other sectors. They told us that these particular trenches were held by twenty officers and eight hundred men. The first of these we saw were in the first aid station, to the left of the officers' quarters, and underground. A murky

A French wounded soldier waiting to be sent down from the aid-post

brown place it was; in front of one wall, half a dozen bunks; in front of another an operating table; in front of the third a bench and a broken chair or two, where slightly wounded men sat, while they waited their turn for the surgeon's attention. Against the front wall stood gas masks and pulmotors. Doubtless a wounded man is glad enough to reach this point after a long uneven journey on a stretcher, but he must be glad to leave it for the ambulance at the entrance and the cheerful hospital in Rheims.

The kitchens were near by, but we were not shown them. Heavily escorted now, with captains, sergeants, and corporals, we set out for our walk through the trenches. At a point opposite the officers' quarters we descended a row of earthen steps into the third-line trenches. The trenches! These open graves of slaughter! I knew what they meant, and yet my practical senses told me that I was simply in a chalk-clay ditch, about eight feet high and four and a half feet wide, over the top of which hung weeds and brownish grass.

Two other trenches ran, for a time, parallel with the one along which we walked. Once through a boyau, or connecting trench, we saw little brown donkeys, wooden receptacles on their backs, in which was the soup for the soldiers' supper. Underfoot there was a little mud, but it was not deep; where it grew deeper trench-mats were set. The trenches twisted and turned,

slightly, so as to deflect shells. They were excellently drained by little side ditches.

After walking for perhaps half an hour we entered a narrow communication trench. It was marked by a board painted white and red, and lettered in black. Every boyau was marked, and, indeed, before we had gone very far, we realized that these indications were necessary. A man would have to live some time in a trench system before he became thoroughly familiar with the maze of intersections. When a soldier moves from one sector to another it is just the same as if he went to a new city.

The boyau twisted and turned, and we proceeded with some difficulty. How hard it must be for stretcher-bearers and wounded men, making their way along that narrow groove! It was a relief to get into the second-line trenches. They were rather more firmly supported than the third-line trenches, being occasionally lined with small boughs in a sort of wattle work. Now we began to pass soldiers carrying square logs and boards for trench repair work. Their faces were unshaven, their clothes muddy. They leaned back against the walls to let us pass, and looked at us smilingly.

Perhaps if Eleanor and I had been men correspondents or staff officers or civilians with a platonic connection with the war, they might not have smiled. But we were women, and a woman in the trenches is as rare as a century plant or a

dodo. We spoke to them, and they responded eagerly, telling us their names and where they lived, and that they remained in the trenches fifteen days on end, getting then six days off in billets near by. When I asked one of them if he had been wounded, he replied,

"Not yet."

Many and many a time I have heard the French soldiers make that reply. There is a quiet fatalism in the words. Death will probably come, they think; at the best, wounds!

When we reached at last the front-line trenches we came upon increasing signs of the business of war. Here and there was an observation post, always named. The Post of the Cock was the one I found most attractive, — a black cock painted on a red ground. There were several first aid posts, with the Red Cross men standing at the entrances. There were the square holes that led to the underground sleeping places some forty steps down. Dank and dark and uncomfortable they were, for all that they are better than almost any others on the French line. The men sleep in their clothes, lying wrapped up in blankets on benches or on the ground.

One great underground place we entered, a narrow room with another running at right angles to it. Here hundreds of men could congregate in case of a fierce bombardment, or could be massed in preparation for an attack on the German lines. This high cave is also the seat of other

military uses which I am not at liberty to state. Near by, after we had climbed by another entrance into the trench, we saw machine-gun emplacements, with cunning *camouflage* screens.

The parapet of the front-line trench was firmly built. Below it was the firing step, a wide plank, elevated some two feet. Here and there in the parapet were holes through which a man, kneeling on the firing-step, could fire a rifle. To stand on the firing-step would bring the head and shoulders above the parapet. On this quiet sector it was considered safe for the sentries to stand to observation. Now the sector is no longer quiet.

We reached a point finally when we were allowed to crouch on the firing-step and peer over the parapet. Vividly, after the chalk and mud of the trenches, there swung before my eyes a picture in green and brown and black. Directly in front of us, extending forward perhaps forty feet, were entanglements of barbed wire to a height of three feet. They were fastened to rusty sharp-pointed iron stakes. Secret lanes were arranged among them, which a clip or two of a pair of shears would reveal to the French soldiers, in case of attack. Here and there, just in front of the barbed wire, well screened, sat a man in blue at a listening post. A bell hung on the wire at hand, so that he could signal in case the Germans were coming to attack, or sending over gas.

In front of the sentries lay No-Man's Land, lumpy and brown in places, but in other places

healed with nature's green. And beyond, a very few hundred yards from us, lay the German trenches. We were told that they were a bit higher than the French, but they seemed rather lower. There they were, just three lines of earth. The heaped-up parapet of the first line looked very black; the two lines beyond were lighter in color. About a half a mile behind these trenches lay the little white village of Cernay.

"You see those little figures over there, walking?" said the stout sergeant whom I had chosen for my special guide. "Those are our own people, those are the French civilian prisoners."

It was easy to guess with what longing those captured French must look over the green hollow of No-Man's Land to unoccupied France, from which their deliverance shall come. Were there some there who were waiting their chance to step across to freedom? Were there others who were growing used to the German rule, gentle enough in those parts?

"Sometimes," the sergeant said, "the French-women come down very, very close to the German lines. We see them out there, gathering herbs for their rabbits. We do not shoot at those times, I can tell you. Me, I have often had my supper in the old days with two of those women over there."

A curious feeling of unreality it gave, to look over at those three heaps of earth upon which the sun was shining. If not friendly, at least they

seemed harmless. I could hear the rattling movement of the German donkeys carrying down supper to our enemies. I even fancied I heard a guttural voice. I had a sudden sense of the grotesque absurdity of war. Wicked but absurd, too, to kill one another from behind heaps of earth.

"I suppose I 've killed a good many Germans," the sergeant said, reflectively; "but I never saw one of them. I never could follow my shots. I 've seen Germans other men have killed, — buried them; but I 've never seen a live German."

We looked back over the green peace of No-Man's Land. No, this war could not be real. Then suddenly the sergeant uttered an exclamation and glanced up. Over our heads, towards the German lines, were flying two French aeroplanes. Under the sunlight, they looked like silver. They reached the German lines and soared above them. Immediately the German guns sent up shell after shell. They made a deep, barking sound, followed by a curious aftermath of whistling. A shell hurtled over our trench. The officers hastily shepherded us to a place of safety. But my sergeant let me look for a moment through the rifle holes.

Shell after shell drove up at the aeroplanes, and in the air dark fungus-like growths of cloud appeared, — unnatural bulbous shapes against the blue. The air was so still that they kept their fatness, not breaking at the edges, just gradually thinning. More shells, more black blobs, and

above and below, and among them, the aeroplanes sailed, impervious, moving with a sort of superior, even insolent serenity. Then from both sides came the plap-plap-plap of machine-gun fire, a continuous, hard, strong, brief, snapping sound. Followed the sound of rifle firing. The air was full of deep booming and baying, of shrill, snarling whistling, of the clap and slap of bullets.

Not real; more like the feeling produced by moving pictures, — melodramatic, nothing more. Not real, even when we looked at the fixed faces of the soldiers. I understood, then, what soldiers mean when they say that they cannot feel that they are really fighting, except when they are under bombardment, or making an attack. The old conception of war as a face-to-face and hand-to-hand struggle dies hard in us. I have met other soldiers like my sergeant guide, men who have been in the trenches for years, who have seen their friends killed, have been wounded themselves, and have never seen a German. No, this had the effect of a play; it was not significant of death.

Then I thought of the first aid station, of women in black, and I knew what it is that makes war real: women shuddering in fear at the sight of a telegram; mothers struggling alone under the burden of being bread winner, as well as sole guardian of their children; little ones asking, "When will papa come?"; girls sobbing at twilight in lonely paths where once they walked with

their lovers; men and women parting in the railway stations; wounded men, white against their bloody bandages, their feet and hands swaying helpless with the movement of the stretcher bearers.

It was dark when we left the third-line trenches, stumbled over the muddy road, and got into our motors. Eleanor and I were silent as we drove over the quiet pitch-black road, past the broken line of Rheims, where the two towers were lost in the dark sky, and got at last into the road leading to Epernay. We were safe now from shells, but neither of us was thinking of safety. We were making silent prayers of thankfulness for all men who could still be at home, for all women and children, the world over, who were still safe from the heaviest loss.

CHAPTER XVI

The Grande Route to Verdun

For a long time it had called me, that Grande Route to Verdun. For Verdun stands up in the history of this time like a mighty warrior rock against which opposing waves have dashed in vain, — "they shall not pass." The Marne stands high in history too, but Verdun has had a wider grasp on the national life because of the vast proportions of the struggle it represents. To it, along the Grande Route, go men from the Midi, from Tours and Avignon and Brittany, from Tunis and Algiers and Morocco. The Children of France, — from all her far-flung provinces they march up along the Grande Route to that strong rock, Verdun, — and some of them march back.

Just a long wide road, admirably kept in spite of the rough traffic and fierce shelling it has suffered; a wide road in a rolling lovely countryside; it is bordered sometimes by poplars, occasionally by a row of cedars, sometimes by a knot of houses; for long stretches it is bare. A road no better than many others but significant as no road in France ever was before.

It fascinated me, this Grande Route, because it lay like some mighty primitive savage way along which the Druids of old built upright pillars lead-

ing to sacrificial altars. For Verdun is the sacrificial altar where France offers up her sons. Whenever I could I went upon this Grande Route, and from going there, and from meeting men who felt its meaning, I gained whatever understanding I have of the French common soldier. Long before I saw it I met men whom it had led to the most staggering experience of their lives, and whose talk of it fired my imagination. There was the little poilu I saw in a canteen cavorting before his companions, a great German helmet on his head, coming so far down that one could see only his beautifully formed mouth and perky little moustache.

"Ah ha, madame," he said proudly; "I paid for that helmet. I want France to have a glorious victory and I want to give my blood for it, and I did, at Verdun."

There was the soldier to whom I gave a bunch of violets at Châlons, and the tears rolled down his face as he thanked me and said he had not seen any violets since he had gone to Verdun with a few he had picked from his own fence corner and had pushed into the envelope with his little girl's picture. There was the young officer who had died in an ambulance upon the Grande Route. I saw him lying in state in the chapel of his father's château with candles at his head and feet, his coat and sword across the coffin. There was Jeanne, — "just Jeanne," so she spoke of herself. She, too, felt the drama of the Grande Route. She

lives near it, close enough to hear the sound of cannonading from Verdun, close enough to be in danger of shells from St. Mihiel. She keeps a little tobacco shop in a village where soldiers are billeted, and she supports her little boy Jean, the four little girls of her widowed brother who was killed in the war, and her other brother, a *réformé* soldier who gets no pension because he was not wounded, merely crippled into uselessness with rheumatism.

The day she talked to me we were standing in the doorway of her shop, watching soldiers marching by; presently they would strike into the Grande Route. In a chair outside the shop sat her brother, wrapped in a quilt, his right arm free so that he might salute the marching officers. Jeanne's face was full of a quiet despair.

"I cannot bear to see them march by," she said. "When the war came my husband and my two elder sons marched away from me along this road. In the winter of 1916 they were at Verdun, all three. My husband was killed, my two boys taken prisoner. I hear nothing of them. The month I had that bad news my twin boys were old enough to be mobilized; they are at Verdun now. You will know why I work, work, work at the shop, in the field, carrying the vegetables to market, washing the clothes of the soldiers. But however hard I work, I am never too tired or too busy to go every day to the chapel to pray that

my four may come back to me safe, — or just wounded.

I spoke of the children she had adopted.

"Strong, I 'm strong," Jeanne said proudly, "and so I can take care of all these. The four children are to match my four boys; the soldier, my brother, is because I think of my husband. You see, madame, a woman whom France needs is proud; she will work till she drops, — and then get up and do it all over. Time enough for rest when victory comes."

The men in blue kept marching by. The boy, Jean, was standing beside the road, shouting rudely at them. Jeanne and his uncle called him, but he merely grimaced at them. An officer stepped a pace to the right and gave him a smart blow on the side of the head. The uncle saluted with a kind of grim satisfaction; he must often have wanted to punish young Jean.

"There it is," said Jeanne; "it is more than our men that have gone. The authority, the law that guides the family is gone. That child Jean, he feels, with his father dead and his brothers away and me so hard at work, that he is free from all need of obedience. No family in France can go on as a family till France is victorious."

There was Etienne from the Grande Route, — tall, thin Etienne whom I met at Bar-le-Duc, as he was waiting for his train to Paris; Etienne with a glorified face, from which all weariness

German prisoners taken at Douaumont

and strain had slipped away; Etienne who was singing at the top of his voice,

" ' Bon voyage, cher Dumollet,
A Saint Malo débarquez sans naufrage,
Bon voyage, cher Dumollet,
Et revenez si le pays vous plaît.
Si vous venez voir le capitale
Méfiez vous des voleurs des amies,
Des billets doux, des coups de la cabale,
Des pistolets et des torticolis.' "

Going on leave is always elevating to the spirits of the soldier, but Etienne's enthusiasm amounted to intoxication. Yet I did not wonder when he explained.

"See, madame," he said, "I lived in the north, near Tourcoing. I was married in the spring of 1914. Good! she was a fine girl, my wife. Very well; we are happy until July. Then, my faith, nothing I can do pleases her and so, naturally, nothing that she can do pleases me. In the last week of July I rose one morning and she was not making the breakfast; she had gone. She left a little letter which said, 'Me, I am gone to stay with my aunt until you are in a better temper.' But naturally it did not improve my temper, that! I was angry; I kept to myself. The next thing came the mobilization. I had time only to pack, to get together two days' rations, to lock up my little house and to send a letter to my wife. It was the letter a loving husband should write. I asked her to come home and wait for my return.

"Then I was sent to the Argonne. Next I

heard that the Germans had poured in upon northern France, upon Tourcoing. That was all; it was as if a curtain had fallen. We had quarrelled; I had said that her cooking would make monkey meat of a fat chicken; she had said I was a '*vieux loppe*.' Ah, well, I thought of it only to wish we had parted as other soldiers and their wives had. It was a bad memory in the trenches.

"I heard nothing, nothing. My first *permission* I spent in Paris trying to get the ear of people who might be able to find my wife for me. But, madame, this is my second *permission*. She is found; she was repatriated but two weeks since. She is safe in Paris and they are letting me go to her. With her is my little son. Think, madame, my little son, almost two years old, of whose existence I did not guess, but who knows my picture, calls it 'papa.' Ah, ha,

"'Bon voyage, cher Dumollet.'"

If only all the men that march upon that route could be as happy as Etienne! Or if they could be as confident as little Christophe who had known a miracle! One Sunday, when I was at the Gare du Nord with a group of soldiers who were just about to depart for the front, I particularly noticed a little sprightly monkey-like creature, gyrating and grimacing, almost unnaturally gay. In his joyous motions his tunic slipped back, and I saw that he had a little sacred medal pinned over his heart.

"It is there because of my saint, madame," he told me; "because of Joan of Arc. One night in the trenches she came to me. She bent over the parapet and spoke to me. She told me that I would not die, if I wore her image over my heart."

Christophe told me, more vaguely, that he had seen the angel of Mons. But here he was vague, not at all like the Highlander who had related to me his mystic experience after Mons. Him I met one evening towards twilight in Essex, when a Zeppelin was expected. I had been making a short cut across fields to the railway station, in order to be safe in London when the bombs were dropping, and I had lost my way. He came silently out of a knot of trees, a light-stepping, grave man, with dark, mournful eyes. It seemed natural, after I had asked him my way, to fall into talk with him. We walked on together. It was very still; the brown winter fields looked asleep; in the sky were beautiful dark-gray cloud formations. I said to him that they looked like a host of shadowy marching men.

"Aye," he agreed; "but shadowy men dinna march."

Then it occurred to me to ask him, as I had asked so many soldiers, what he thought of the Miracle of Mons.

"I was there," he said; "I saw it."

In my mind rose a hinterland of vague memories — tales of Highland second-sight, of mysterious visions, of haunting seanachas, of ancient

Gaelic mysticism. They were in accord with this quiet evening and with this grave, still man whose deep eyes spoke worlds of experience which no woman could ever know. In that moment nothing he could have said to me would have seemed unreal.

Without preface he began to tell me what he had felt and seen.

"We were three brothers," he said, "and before the battle of Mons, in the middle of the night, my brother Dougal touched me on the shoulder and woke me. 'I 'll no be going back wi' ye, Jock,' he said. 'Ye 'll tak' this letter to my mother.' He had heard his call, and I didna call it foolishness.

"After the sergeant ordered us to stand to, before the attack, my brother Alexander came past me, with an order from the first lieutenant to the sergeant, and he stopped to shake hands wi' me, and he said, 'Good-by t' ye, lad.' By that I knew that Alexander had learned he wouldna march back wi' me.

"Ye 'll have heard of the battle? Those at home knew more of it than we did for many a day. A man 's a madman in a battle; he sees nothing but the Germans in front of him. You might have thought I would be wondering when and how my brothers would die. I wasna even thinking of mysel' as something that could die.

"I wasna thinking at all. It was all shouting and red horror, and keeping at it. I didna rightly

come to mysel' till we were in retreat. It was when we were marching with the Germans at our back, instead of before us, that I began to feel like a man again, and it was shame I felt, and grief and wonder. Then it was that the corporal who walked beside me spoke to me, and he said that he had seen Dougal die, and that he died without pain, shot through the head. When we walked on farther, he told me that Alexander was dead, too, but that his death was less merciful. This corporal was in the same platoon with my brothers, and he knew.

"It was in the twilight when I came to full grief for my brothers. We were marching, drooping like tired beasts. Once some German snipers shot at us, and killed the man just behind me. I fell to thinking what if that had been me and how would my mother fare, wi' all three of her sons gone? I began to wish for my own life then, for my mother's sake.

"That twilight was full of terrors. Germans everywhere, and if not Germans, then fear and wonder and distress. I could see men falling down — struck, who knew how? No one dared stop to see if it were a bullet, or just sleep that overcame them. And it seemed to me as if the Germans were sweeping up on us like a tide. I heard myself crying on my elder brother Dougal, and crying on my mother, too.

"Then all suddenly I found myself walking backward, and looking — looking into the dark.

Against the sky behind I felt there was something. I looked — and then the blackness shaped itsel' into dim figures. Men have said that it was the angels helping us that night against the Germans. It may have been, but that is not what I saw. Those who helped us appeared to my eyes like the men that had fallen on our side in the battle of Mons. They had fallen because we were outnumbered and unprepared. They had died too soon, before all their work for their country was done. And now they had risen in the dark to hold back the Germans. That they fought with weapons I do not believe, but that they were helping us, I know.

"'Dougal!' I cried. 'Aleck!'

"And though I couldna see them, I knew my brothers were there, guarding me. They couldna go back to my mother again, but they would protect me, for her sake. I couldna hear my brothers speak; I didna hear any sound from those who helped us.

"'Do you see?' I said to the corporal.

"He saw nothing, but he listened; and he said he could hear the Germans shouting. I heard them, too; cries of surprise, and fear. The corporal thought they were the shouts of victors, but I knew who the victors were. I was filled wi' a great peace, like the sense of rest after pain. It is not defeat when men come back from the dead to help."

But I never thought of the Miracle of Mons

when I was near the Grande Route or near Verdun. Story after story I heard from men who knew the trenches of Verdun as each of us knows our own home. And this and that tour brought me nearer the Grande Route until at last I saw the men in blue upon it. To drive along it from end to end was not given me; something yet waits me there, but I have seen enough of it to feel something of its meaning.

I remember the late afternoon that we drove across the road and came suddenly on a camp of soldiers. Their fires, burning low, made a deep pink glow in the brown gloom. The men, their blue darkened in the shadows, sat about the glow, their packs beside them, bread and wine in their hands. Behind them a few horses, their heads drooping, were tethered against a bulwark of wagons.

I remember an early morning when a heavy mist swathed the road we were on so that the car seemed swimming through a gray-blue sea. We were going at right angles to another road, and suddenly, veiled in the gray-blue swathing cloud, I saw half a division going up to the Grande Route: wagons and horses, lorries and kitchens and men in blue who looked like wraiths. They seemed to drift, and presently they were not wraiths; the mist lightened, and they were those young, young soldiers that went up to make the latest heavy advance at Verdun. History is made on the Grande Route, and drama; history for

people who will read it impersonally, and drama for those whose hearts are sympathetic and whose imagination is keen.

Of those I met on or near the Grande Route, three soldiers stand out for me as especially individual characters: Antoine, Gaspard, and Gaston. I shall not call them "typical soldiers" or "typical soldiers of France," for I am sure I don't know what the typical soldier is. I have read descriptions of him as joking, laughing, complaining over little things, making light of serious difficulties, enthusiastic over the victories the Allies gain, and eager, in the hospitals, to get cured quickly of wounds so as to return to fight. All I can say is that of the hundreds I have talked to in England and France, —they all had a way of turning into individuals and not conforming to such a type at all. For all that they are obedient, they are not machines; they are strongly flavored personalities, capable, after you know them, of surprising you.

To give a trivial instance: there was Arsène, fiercest of little soldiers in attack, mildest of men in the trenches, where he let anyone impose upon him. I saw him on New Year's night, a diffident, shrinking little man, self-conscious and self-depreciatory. A party was being given to soldiers about to return to the front. After a grand supper and gifts, someone, half as a joke, began to throw dolls to the soldiers. They all tried to catch one. Time after time Arsène tried; some big comrade

would push him aside, and Arsène would give back with a deprecatory smile. I secured a doll, and burrowing through the parapet of spectators I gave it to him. He was radiant; he told me that he meant to send it to his little girl. A few days later I had a letter from a *filleul*, who told me, as a joke, that Arsène had not been able at once to post his doll to his little girl, had carried it into the trenches, and it had then disappeared. He had gone Berserker, offered to kill all the men in the platoon if the doll were not given back; he had to be held by some of his amazed comrades. Later someone found it; a rat had eaten half its head off. Arsène was now (evidently with deadly seriousness) killing every rat he could reach.

I do not feel as if I can generalize with wisdom about the French soldier. Perhaps it would have been possible, to a degree, about the old army which was a caste; but the new army is the whole nation. He does remind me of an Irishman in his frankness, wit, sympathy, and sensitiveness to beauty. I find him patriotic, uncomplaining, stoical. He strikes me as a forced martyr; he is willing to die for France, but in his dark moods he wants to be killed if the war does not end soon. In his lighter moods he believes that it will end within a future of six or eight months. They have given everything to France, these soldiers: their standards of living; their bodies, their souls, their minds; men who were once capable of splendid

thoughts are now vacant-minded in the trenches; their minds are as if suspended till the war ends. There is nothing that France asks from them that she may not have, but they give because they love France and not because they like the grim job she has set them to.

Antoine, Gaspard, and Gaston, then, seemed to me not necessarily typical, but good examples of flavored personalities. Meeting Antoine was the one gay experience I had on the Grande Route. I was in a military car of which the "essence" had failed. The driver went for more and I got out to see what was on the road. I saw Antoine. His coloring was like that of an English country boy, and his clean-shaven face heightened the resemblance. But there it stopped; Antoine's glancing eyes were Gallic, and also his neat mouth. His smile was like a "bravo!" Strictly speaking, I did not meet him on the Grande Route but on a road leading from it, going back into billets and quiet. And at the moment I saw him he was not smiling, though it was evident that his face was made for merriment. He and another man were in charge of a wagon and two mules. As I learned later, Antoine's slight physical constitution had shut him out of the trenches. He and his comrade were leaning back against the wagon, shaking their heads, and looking gloomily at the mules.

I noticed the mules first, for "mules" is a word to which, for me, the war has given a new connotation. If, in pre-war days, I ever thought

of mules, it was with the conventional assumption that they were obstinate, and were liable to kick at unexpected and adroitly selected moments. But so many English soldiers have talked to me about them and their endurance that I never hear the word "mules" without a surge of affection for those quiet, patient, sure-footed animals that will go where horses will not, that never, in tight places, get a fit of nerves, as horses do, that never stumble, and that work till they drop, — like soldiers.

While I gazed at Antoine's mules with admiration, Antoine's comrade got in an upright position, shook a few lumps of mud off his mired blue overcoat, and passionately kicked the mules, one after the other. I heartily regretted that this was not my affair, and, indeed, I did involuntarily take a step forward. Then I heard Antoine say,

"Impossible, Victor. Let them stand. Leave it to me."

He had stopped shaking his head, and his face was gay.

"It will be a long wait," he added, cheerfully, "but what of that?"

Since we were both waiting we fell into talk.

"Did the mules deserve the kicks your friend gave them?" I asked.

"But look at the back of his coat, madame," giggled Antoine.

I looked; the back of his coat did not seem to me very different from the front or from the

man's face or boots, but evidently Antoine saw a difference, for he continued, with bubbling laughter,

"Victor tried to push Melanie — she is the mule nearest us; and Melanie pushed back. Ah, she is the sly one. She put old Victor in the mud."

"Melanie! What a pretty name."

"It 's the soldier's name for his sweetheart and his pipe, and I gave it to Melanie because she is the girl for me, that one, for all her tricks. The other one, Belle-Amie, is Victor's favorite."

Perhaps Antoine thought I was inwardly commenting on Victor's way of showing favoritism, for he went on,

"They 're good girls, those mules, but madame arrived at a moment when they were neglecting their manners. They do not like this road. I think it was Melanie who whispered to Belle-Amie that it would be amusing not to like the road. Very well; I beg and plead; then I push; Victor pushes. There they stand. Ah, but look at Victor!"

Victor was seated on the back of the wagon, glowering bitterly.

"Poor Victor! We have been on the road so long," said Antoine, blithely. "We have had nothing to eat since morning, for we expected to be in billets before this, eating good hot soup. For three hours, now, Belle-Amie and her devil's counsellor, my Melanie, have stood, just so. Look at them, madame; their faces."

Their faces were merely blank; they stared fixedly in front of them, seeming not even to move their eyelids. No methods applied to them, it would seem, would make them look up. They were amusing, — but they were a bit awe-inspiring, too, in their imperturbability.

"For three hours," said Antoine, laughing, "everyone who has passed these daughters of evil has beaten them or pushed them, and has gone away with a kick or a shroud of mud. Ah, well, they deserve a little fling of temper, now that we are in a safe place, for in a dangerous place, madame, they never fail me. They are not afraid of this road. They merely do not like it, and they understand that it will not harm me if they give way to their mood. But if there were something really to be afraid of these girls would not even wink.

"Ah, who knows that better than I? For I have taken them over a road with ammunition in the wagon when the shells were falling, and I assure you they pretended to crop the grass by the roadside. It is the truth I speak, madame! Once, when Victor and I and another man were leading ten mules, a shell came plop in the middle of them. Such a pot-pourri of blood and severed limbs! Naturally, we thought they were all finished. After a few minutes Melanie and Belle-Amie slowly raised their heads as if to say, 'Is it safe to get up?'

"A little quiet deviltry now and then, what

does it signify? It is lost in the memory of the way they will carry ammunition straight up to a gun that the Germans are feeling for with their biggest shells. They only do what they please, those two, when they are in a safe place like this."

"But you 'll have to start them some time," I said, looking respectfully at the mules. "Do you mean to starve them into obedience?"

"But no, madame. I should be dry bones myself before they gave in. No; after it is dark I shall take their heads and turn them so that they will think they are going back over the Grande Route. Then I shall take them out of the harness and turn them round and round till they are without sense. Then I put them back to the wagon and boum! we are off! They will think they are going back, and before they know it they will be warm in billets."

It was good to hear his ringing laughter in that zone of war, and I devoutly hoped that the chauffeur would take some time to find our essence. Antoine rattled on gaily, and presently we were talking of the German prisoners who had been sent back from Verdun a few days before.

"Ha! if you could have seen them," said Antoine, "so glad, as all the world knows, to be taken prisoner. I was bringing up ammunition and I did not hear how the battle was going. I had my work, madame understands, and it was not my business to speculate. Very well; I do not then hear this: that we are taking prisoners, and

that we have no men to spare to send back with them as escorts; that we face them towards Verdun, those we do not keep back as stretcher bearers; that we give them a push in the back and say, 'Go that way!'

"One of these Germans must have got himself lost, madame. I am half mad with work; my wagon is mired; we cannot get it out of the shell-hole without help. I run back for more mules and two men. I meet this Boche. Figure him to yourself, madame; big, so big as a lamp-post, with his jaw dropped and his face full of terror and weariness. Me, I should have been sorry for him if I had not been so busy. He stumbled towards me, his hands raised.

"'Kamarad,' he said, and then he took off his helmet and handed it to me; 'Kamarad; souvenir,' he said, in French to turn the stomach, 'I am your prisoner!'

"Madame will see that I do not accuse myself when I say I forgot my manners. Perhaps I should have remembered our proverb, 'Politeness as far as the gallows, but hanging, nevertheless.' But my affairs were very pressing, and I said to him,

"'Get out of my way! Get out of here!'

"He clutched me, saying, 'I am your prisoner.'

"'You are not my prisoner,' I said to him, keeping his helmet all the same. 'Get out.'

"That one had assurance. 'You have taken my helmet,' he said; 'you will protect me.'

"That was a pretty thing, madame, to have a prisoner take possession in this way of a soldier of France! I was so indignant that I was about to do him some damage, when he said,

"'I appeal to your French chivalry. I am hungry. I am thirsty.'

"After that what could I do, madame? I took him back with me, polite now, but raging. We met another wagon and mules and two men. We all returned and pulled out my wagon, my prisoner helping. Then I gave him a drink of my wine and a loaf of bread, and I turned him about, facing to the city.

"'Monsieur,' I said to him, 'go that way, I entreat you. Pray pardon my inability to accompany you. Go that way, and I beg of you do not turn aside. It might be that you would meet some other Frenchman, busy like myself, and might incommode him. There are others, too, who lack the time to take prisoners. Go direct, monsieur.'

"But then, madame, behold my Melanie! I have her out of the harness to put at the head of the other mules when we pull out the wagon. She has been eyeing that Boche. He does not please her. She does not like it when I give him my wine and bread. And Melanie, — she does not have to be polite; the Boche has not begged to be her prisoner. She slips over to him, madame, and she pushes him, with her shoulder, off the road. That is the way she reads the situation, madame; that is the way she treats an enemy

who has surrendered. Nothing brutal, it is understood; just push him out of the way."

Joyous little Antoine; what cared I how much of his tale was invention! How regretful I was when the chauffeur returned with apologies for my long waiting. I think I was never sorrier to part from anyone in France than from that little rosy dark soldier. The memory of him was good to have at times when I saw soldiers who had almost forgotten how to smile.

Gaspard was one of these. He was a little brown man with a ferocious frown, a sardonic mouth, and a bitter heart. He saw me on the Grande Route, and later, when we met in billets, he recalled the circumstance, and we talked. Gaspard hated not only the Germans and the war, but almost everybody except the soldiers.

"When this war began, madame," he said, "I was a child, a trusting child, but now I am grown up, me. And what began it? I had gone out to war singing. I fought in those first bad weeks on the Marne, when we sheltered behind trees, or clumps of grass, or had no shelter, when we retreated, hungry, worn out, sick because we were losing. Then came the stand; the tide was turning. We were reinforced. I went with my comrades to a little village to get some wine. Other soldiers had been there to buy but there was plenty left.

"Ah, yes, but what did she do, that bearded old mother of Satan that kept the wine-shop. She

charged me that first day, for wine that was worth twelve sous, fifteen. There was no use to go to another place. The shopkeepers had combined to eat up all our money. Before we went to another village, before our officers had interfered for us, those people were asking two francs for wine worth twelve sous.

"Bah, those civilians! We soldiers, we give our skin for them, and then they cheat us! They grow rich. Men are driving in their automobiles who used to walk; women are buying pearls who three years ago could not have bought a string of glass beads. It is true. In Paris the manufacturers of private automobiles are selling them as never before. Every afternoon at half past four these people drive down the Champs Elysées. In the morning they walk with their lapdogs in the rue de Bois. Out of our blood they have made their money. And with that money they buy the freedom of their sons, put them, the fine *embusqués*, in some safe service. But we — we die to make their purses fat!

"See, madame, I have given everything to France. We had a little place near Douai, my wife and I. We worked hard, I assure you. For our two little ones, a boy and a girl, we made many plans. Then the town-crier read the proclamation of a general mobilization, and I went. I had no letters. I heard of the German invasion of Douai. For months I did not know whether they were alive, my wife and children. Then at

last I had a letter. They had fled before the Germans. What horrors my wife wrote of; crowds pushing along the road, children dying of starvation and of terror, the dogs running with them, and waiting at the cross-roads always to see which way the people would go. The neighbors who fled after my wife reported to her that my little home is pulverized, my ground has become no man's land. Do you know what that means? That it will be years before I can get good crops again or build a home. Never mind, I think; they are safe. The Red Cross ladies give them clothes. France will take care of my wife and children.

"They go to Troyes, madame, and the civilians in Troyes begin to clutch at them. My wife got work. She rented a little room at an unheard of price; she rented furniture. For a bed they charged her ten francs a month rent and everything else equally dear. To live at all she had to take in with her a friend. In three months she has paid in rent for her furniture what the things would have cost to buy them. Ah, and it is these people of Troyes, to keep such as them safe that I live in mud and cold, eaten by vermin, my clothes stiff as wood. It is for them that the coffee-mill (machine-gun) grinds out the bullets that tear my flesh to shreds! Civilians, I spit on them."

I tried to tell Gaspard of the unselfishness of certain French civilians that I knew of but the tide of his eloquence swept on.

"Look you, madame, they come into the trenches sometimes, these civilians. Joy-riding, we call it. They come in order that they may go back and say to their friends, 'I was under fire, me! I had powerful influence, and so I was allowed to go into the trenches.' Pah! they come smirking over the excitement of seeing how our dear little soldiers live! I wonder we don't tear them to pieces! We soldiers, we want our fighting to get us somewhere, to get France somewhere, not to make bloodsuckers rich! Good civilians there may be. I speak of those I know. And good or bad, it is not for the civilians I am fighting, but for France, and for my wife and children."

"But at least," I ventured, "you do not find the soldiers like that? Some day the soldiers will go back and turn into the kind of civilians you like."

Garpard's grim face melted.

"Ah, yes, the comrades! One makes a friend, madame; one builds up a parapet with him, eats with him, shares tobacco, and then a shell kills him. One dare not love his comrades, — but one does love them. Before this war one forgot if this and that friend invited him out to supper, or took him to a café. But in the trenches one does not forget when a friend lends him a pair of boots. Ah, yes, one finds good hearts in the trenches. Sometimes even one of these rich boys who used to dance the tango and powder his ears, — he will be a good friend, too. If they are not

all killed, our friends, we shall have great old days talking these battles over. Yes, and the young ones will sit about listening while we slap it on thick. But we could not slap it on thicker than it is. Ah, yes, those days will pay a little for these days."

Poor Gaspard, I hope that he will live to see his dream come true. Like so many soldiers, he takes it for granted that he will not be killed; others, doubtless, but not he. Little gentle Gaston, on the contrary, saw death over every parapet. He was a slim wand of a man whom I met once when he was so covered with mud that he looked almost as if some sculptor had modelled him roughly out of clay and had set him up by the side of the road to dry.

"Mud" is another word for which the war has given me a new connotation. One never talks long to a soldier from any part of the western front without hearing of it. There are terrible tales of the scores of men who have been smothered in shell holes at Verdun. Even when, on the march, a man can avoid shell holes, the mud clutches at his feet like fat squeezing hands, clogs his ankles, swathes his knees, leaps at his thighs, spatters his body and face, weighs him down like an infinitely multiplied old-man-of-the-sea. It is a combination of two elements with all the potency of each at its worst. It seems as if Nature, on her own account, were fighting against soldiers. With infinite weariness a sol-

dier pulls at his right leg; it comes up slowly from knee to ankle, to foot. What a relief to feel it free! Then, one pace forward he drops it; down it goes, sinking, sucked, painfully weighted, coming to rest at last with a jarring jerk. It seems impossible that he could ever move again — and then it is all to do over with the other leg. A man may joke when he begins to walk in the mud, but before the march ends he could, but for his sex, weep like a child. Shells, shrapnel, machine-guns, trench morters, bombs, — these may make a man dodge and curse, but nothing fills him with such dragging despair as the mud. There is bitter irony in the fact that just mud can rack the souls and bodies of men, make them forget country and home and the enemy, turn them into desperately lurching things, wanting only to lie down. One day a great story will be written about the mud. In it lies buried more grandeur and despair than has ever been put between the covers of a book.

Later, when Gaston was scraped and measurably dry, and fed, I asked him a question I had long wanted to put to a soldier.

"What do you talk about in the trenches, Gaston?"

Gaston pinched his chin reflectively.

"That depends, madame. Suppose it is cold, wet. When I say that I do not mean cold and wet as one understood them before the war. But I mean a soaking mist with the breath of ice in it, cold so intense that one dare not sit down for

fear of freezing. In weather such as that we do not think. If we talk at all it is to complain because the meal is late in coming, or to prophesy that it will be rotten stuff when it comes. We get angry for nothing, — because a comrade accidentally knocks us with his foot, or because we suddenly do not like the shape of his nose. We shout terrible things at him, and then, in the middle of what we were saying, we stop, as if it were not worth while to finish."

Gaston paused, knitting his brows.

" I am sorry I asked you, Gaston, if it distresses you to remember."

Gaston laughed shortly.

" It is not that, madame, it is that when I am sitting here, so comfortable, all that to which I must go back is an ugly dream. I imagine that it was not so bad as I thought it. If perhaps a sudden weariness reminds me that life in the trenches has made my bones old, has made me no longer young Gaston, then I say to myself that perhaps soon I shall be sent to a quiet sector."

" But there are good days, Gaston, when the sun shines? "

" Ah, yes; when the sun shines, when we have hot food and wine in our bottles, then, indeed, we are content. We are gay, we even sing. It is some little song we knew at home. We talk of our homes, of our wives, of our girls, of our children. We repeat some bright saying of the little ones. We tell some story of the village skin-

flint that made us angry once, but now we laugh at it. We remember little things that used to be in the happy past; how, as children, our mothers would come to the door and stand looking after us as we gambolled down the street to play with the other boys. We remember how our wives would cook for us our favorite food, keeping the dish covered till the last minute with a mysterious smile. We remember the last letter we wrote home, and think that perhaps it was not cheerful enough. We talk of the ending of the war, believing that it must come soon. We tell how we would have fought this and that battle to have gained a greater and a quicker victory. Ah, yes; on these sunny days we could teach our generals.

" Then the time of our *permission* seems not so far away. We make plans and our plans have nothing to do with the war. When I was last on my *permission* I went to the house of the gentleman for whom I worked. My wife is also cook there. He is kind; he kissed me on both cheeks as if he had been my captain greeting me after a victory, and he said,

" ' Gaston, my child, you and Emilie may go wherever you like for your week.'

" But I said to him, ' Pardon, monsieur, I prefer to take up my work again here, to wait on the table as I did. The house has suffered since I left. I noticed that a rung of madame's chair had come loose; the stair carpet requires, in places, fresh

tacking. There is much that I should like to occupy myself with at home, monsieur.'

" So I worked in the house all week and slept in a bed and forgot that I was a soldier. I did not think I should be alive long enough to sleep again in a bed. When I went back to the trenches I had good memories."

Gentle Gaston, fierce Gaspard, gay Antoine, your feet have marched away again up that Grande Route to Verdun. The crisp fall of marching feet! Once it meant for me only that a number of men were walking in unison. But now it means courage so eternal that it turns flagging flesh to steel; an endurance so keen that it takes no account of pain, a passion for France so flaming that it swings men on to face any fate. So many of those feet that march for France have gone through the last outposts that lie beyond the trenches of any earthly enemy. But they will go on marching so long as the world holds precious the qualities by which we may hope to recapture civilization.

CHAPTER XVII

Barnstorming for the Poilus

It was very early in the morning on a platform of that station in Paris from which the poilus depart for the front.

I was seeking for a group of actors and actresses from the French army theatre, — now in its second year. Thanks to the courtesy of M. Alphonse Séché, the secretary of the theatre, I was to spend with them almost a week. The company was going up to some little villages back of Verdun and within easy shell reach of St. Mihiel, to give entertainment to various companies of soldiers, just back from the terrible last days at Verdun. Finding my companions would be simple, for anyone on the platform not a soldier or employee would be an "artist." There they were, in a group, four women and three men, standing beside a first-class carriage, under the interested gaze of poilus who should have been seeking their own third-class carriages.

They were worth gazing at, these famous people who were giving their distinguished services free, day after day, to bring a few soothing hours of forgetfulness to the men who are giving their all to France. As I walked up the platform, what I noticed first, as any woman will under-

stand, was a magnificent long sable coat and two huge diamond rings. They were on the tall figure and small, strong hand of Mlle. Marcelle Praince, of the Variétés, whose beauty has cheered many a man about to die, or back from the clutch of death. Pretty, regular features, hair of the new French black-red shade, an alluring smile, a graceful figure, — that is, Mademoiselle Praince, expert actress, particularly of the shrewish wife type. She was talking to Mme. Beatrix Dussand of the Comédie-Française and to Georges Marey of the Athénée. It was logical that the three should be set apart, for no other actors in Paris have given themselves more freely to the Théâtre aux armées. They had the spirit to fight; failing the ability, they acted for those who could fight. Georges Marey is an admirable actor, beloved of the Parisians for his clever work in comedy, a joy to watch. He was mobilized and then rejected on the score of health. He is handsome, ebon-dark as to hair and eyes, and lithe, nervous, stung to the quick with a passion for France. When I approached, he was nodding approvingly at a remark of Madame Dussand, which was:

"And so I said to him, 'You may be a great author, but I will not act in your plays, for you are a coward, an *embusqué*. You should be fighting. I would not act with an actor who was an *embusqué!* Why should I have anything to do in your plays?' Ah, yes, everyone in the

Comédie-Française knows what I think of that man!"

What Madame Dussand thinks would count with the members of the Comédie-Française, for she is one of their best actresses, which means one of the best in the whole world. As I saw her on the platform there, her splendid dark eyes flashing, her strong chin cocked at an obstinate angle, forceful, full-blooded, her voice a bit tense and emphatic, I did not realize how finished, how perfect, how subtle, her acting would be.

Those three I saw first, against that background of poilu blue, magnetic, vivid people, dear to the hearts of Parisians, dearer still to thousands of soldiers before whom they have poured themselves as they never have to the Parisians. But there were four others: a small, blonde, lustrous woman in brown; a taller dark woman in brown and yellow; a dark, thickset, short man, dressed like a poilu, and a tall, stout man in black who could have passed for an American. Georges Marey took me in charge, and made the introductions. When he presented the smaller woman, Mme. Nina May of the Opéra-Comique, she responded in good United States of the southern brand, and her big blue eyes beamed with fraternal welcome. She is from New Orleans, but is married to a Belgian and sings now by preference in Paris.

The two men hastened to use what English they had. The tall one, M. Robert Casa, shows

the world an innocently humorous comedian face that can alter in a moment to sly knowingness. For long he has been a singer with the Scala theatre. When the war broke out he left singing and was put in the trenches at Verdun. But his heart was weak; he could not run on march, and he was sent back to civil life. M. Lucien Boyer has every right to his poilu uniform, for at the beginning of the war he served in the trenches for over a year. For long he has been well known in France because of his writing and singing. He has the poilu beard, is slightly bald, and has a good-humored smile, which is in keeping with his comfortable bourgeois figure, from which has long since departed a waist line.

The fourth woman, Mlle. Debory, was, like myself, going with this particular group for the first time. She acts at the Athénée, but her clearer title to importance is the pleasure she gives the soldiers with her recitations. She is dark, good-looking, a bit saurian in type, with a charm that convinces men at once and women a little later.

After our greetings were over Mlle. Prainee took from her " sac " a lip stick of highly unnatural purple-red and, with the aid of a jewelled mirror, applied it to her lips in a neat cupid's bow. It started an epidemic, just as a cough does in a theatre. Each of the other women lip-sticked, or powdered, or rouged, the soldiers looking on with deep interest. I suppose, if beauty is a profession, one has a right to carry it on in the open, but

surely one appreciates beauty more if it has the air of being unconscious. American women are said to carry on their facial adornment too freely in public, but they are nothing like so frank and frequent about it as French women are nowadays, nor is their coloring so high and startling.

With various repetitions of "After you, Alphonse," "After you, Gaston," designed to show me that they were up on current American literature, the performers helped themselves and me into the train. It was full of officers going back to the front, with a sprinkling of British ambulance drivers. Everyone who passed our compartment gazed in with passionate absorption, — and yet with the effect of great politeness. Madame Dussand tried to get the window opened, could not, and said,

"*Zut!*"

I believe "*zut*" is a dreadful word, but it thrilled me only about to the extent that "gosh" does, though I always supposed, if I ever heard that word spoken I should get a "hell" thrill.

The train started, and we heard in a thin, faraway, trailing sound the cheering of the poilus. For these men always go forth to die gallantly; *noblesse oblige* is no longer an axiom for the well born, but for every fighter in France. We read our papers, commented on the news, looked out of the windows, powdered and rouged again. To save time, I shall cease to mention this opera-

Convalescent

tion; but figure it to yourself as occurring when nothing else does.

"Prainee, my *cocotte* (another naughty word)," said Madame Dussand, "my boots are longer than yours."

"Not," said Mlle. Prainee.

They put their feet up on the seats, the men making way, and we measured the height of their boots, — I doing it with my eyes only. Then all of us showed our boots and bragged about them. All the time officers were passing, looking in with longing eyes. The men went away to smoke; Mademoiselle Prainee began to practise the "invocation" she was to say to the soldiers when we gave our first programme; Madame Dussand told me something of what I was to see.

"An actress who has played for the soldiers," she said, "burns to go back. When one returns to Paris after a first visit to the front one is n't the same person, — and one can't endure the people who find time long."

"I should think to play before these soldiers from Verdun would be particularly moving," I offered.

Mlle. Prainee left off rehearsing and said,

"Ah, Verdun, — there is nothing so moving as to play before the soldiers of Verdun, for one is playing before the soldiers of all France. I have acted almost everywhere at the front, and I have carried away unforgettable impressions of bravery, of power. But Verdun, — ah, there

I found something mysterious, sacred even. I kept my voice lowered, as if I were in a sick chamber, or a church, and so did everyone else. The officers gave us dinner in a great dining-room; there were fully four hundred of us, but no one raised his voice; there was nothing but a great, gentle murmuring. And then to go out in the streets, and see the soldiers who had been through such horrors; to see them passing by, just rolls of mud! You will know more presently, madame, of Verdun mud. Ah, — but Verdun — one goes away never the same!"

No one spoke for a moment. There in that crowded compartment, in spite of the clamor of the creaking train, and the voices of officers in the corridor, I felt a sense of silence, of poignancy, of deep, inexpressible feeling. Then the men came in to escort us to second breakfast. By this time we were well in the war zone. We knew it, not only by the fact that there were no women passengers except those of our group; but also because of what flashed by the windows as we rushed on to Epernay, — to Châlons-sur-Marne, to Bar-le-Duc.

During the long meal Mlle. Praince and Madame May and I sat opposite British ambulance drivers, and here I got rid of the fallacy about the "inimitable French gesture." It is n't inimitable at all. Those Englishmen imitated it admirably, and since then I 've observed scores of American ambulance drivers and aviators shrug-

ging and grimacing just as charmingly as the French do. By the time I had verified this discovery we were at Bar-le-Duc. Out we got, to be met by the lieutenant without whom thereafter we were not permitted to move, and to be put in military motors and driven to the chief hotel.

Water did not seem scarce at Bar-le-Duc, especially in view of the rain, but I have never seen such a dirty hotel as that one. Every morning water was sprinkled on the grimy floors, and little blobs of mud arose, protestingly. I imagine if anyone had tried to scrub the floors the top layer of dirt would have yelled agonizedly, and begged not to be separated from its lower layers, the companions of a generation! When I got to my room I stripped down the bed and examined the sheets. I could see the print of two other people. This is war time, and we ought to be democratic, but there are limits. I slept on a nice clean kimona. I afterwards found that the other women had done the same. When we complained to the men, they said, "Dirt? What dirt?" and began to talk about the excellent food, which shows what men are! But the food *was* excellent.

The plan was to go in motors each morning to our objective, wherever it might be, returning each night to sleep in Bar-le-Duc. We were to go first to a little village called Erizé-St.-Dizier, not very far from St. Mihiel. We set out under the pouring rain, Madame May, M. Casa and I going together.

"I can tell by the look of that chauffeur," said M. Casa, "that he will have no respect for our backbones. Look out for jars."

It was a correct diagnosis; moreover, during the next few days the driver lost his way several times, to our sincere satisfaction. He took us off at a smart pace, and Madame May hummed a bar of the *Marseillaise,* with which she was going to end the programme.

"What is this entertainment like?" I asked. "Do you sing other patriotic songs? Are the plays patriotic?"

"Oh, no!" she said. "At first, when the theatre was organized, we used to have such plays and songs, but it made the soldiers nervous. They don't want plays about heroes."

"I 've heard them talk about that," said M. Casa. "Their life is so different from ours that we can't interpret it. They don't like it if you say 'Forward' or 'We 'll get them,' — like that poster, you know, '*Ou les aura!*' Why should they? For we 're only civilians. They have their officers for that. We don't know what we 're talking of when we use big phrases about war to them. No wonder we set their teeth on edge. I know, for I was in the trenches once."

"They don't want to be instructed, either," Madame May added; "they just want to laugh. So we give them all sorts of comedies and farces, and funny recitations, and songs of the road. They like to hear about Paris, for they want to

know if our skirts are really to our knees, as people say, and if we walk with canes. Oh, look at those strange little men."

They were Annamites, repairing the road. Our route led us over undulating country. Sometimes we were on a hill and could look down and see a valley with a little stream running through it, and an abnormally high poplar far off on a plateau; we would pass a bare slope, a huddle of houses; then little villages, from which half the inhabitants had gone; little knots of trees. We passed trenches and barbed-wire entanglements, and, just a little further on, we saw a young woman ploughing and an old man forking hay out of a loft. Twilight was promising when we drew up at a farmhouse. We stepped out and Madame May shrieked. The Verdun mud! We had only a few steps to go, but we were well splashed and laden when we reached the doorsill.

We passed through a kitchen with a wide hearth, beside which a smiling, white-capped old woman stood, and entered a sitting-room full of officers. Headquarters, evidently, and the officers had tea for us. Charming men, some of them rather nervous, I thought, but that was little to wonder at in view of their seven awful days in the Verdun attack. Rarely have women been welcomed as we were. I heard one officer say he had n't heard the swish of a silk petticoat for months.

The officers inquired about our journey, and

asked where we were going after Erizé-St.-Dizier. The women replied that God knew, and described the horrors of the dirt in the hotel at Bar-le-Duc. I judged our sympathetic auditors must have known something about dirt.

Tea over, we got into the motors, and, looking back, we could make out the figures of the officers hurrying after us on foot, each carrying a chair. We drove to a huge barn that must have measured forty by a hundred feet. No poilu stood outside; they were all within, making sure of standing room, but eager, welcoming faces beamed at us out of the doorway.

And inside, — a silent blue shadow, the crowded silhouettes of the standing poilus; the dim, white, smiling faces; their eager silence. We felt their greeting, their interest, the moment we entered. That silence spoke deeply; those patient, brave, standing men, who had been through such horror, and who were waiting so gratefully for the people who were going to bring them a little gaiety!

"Ah, madame," said M. Boyer at my elbow, "do not drive the tears back. They are worthy of it, these soldiers of France. In our hearts all we artists weep whenever we play for them."

We stumbled across a muddy earthen floor to the back of the building. We did not realize till later how the soldiers had worked to make the place ready for us, taking out the fodder and sweeping up, as well as they could. At the back

they had erected a little stage, on which stood a table and a chair or two. The footlights were furnished by four acetylene lamps, fed by a pipe running from the cans; they had fashioned burlap curtains, which two of them stood ready to draw. They had even curtained off a little space at one side of the stage where the actors might dress and make up. As we crossed the muddy floor a little string orchestra of poilus began to play. While the performers went behind the dressing curtain I stayed and applauded the musicians. At the end of their piece, when I told them how good their work was, the leader said.

" Ah, madame should have heard us before the attack at Verdun. We had some members then, but half of us were lost in that first half hour."

When the band began to play again and the officers entered, carrying the orchestra seats, I went behind the curtains. Madame Dussand was backed against the wall, her lips moving, her beautiful eyes rather glazed.

" If I did n't know better," I began, " I should think — "

" Ah, but I am nervous," she said. " It 's not the ordinary *trac,* but something deeper, something nearer my heart. I have played before the most illustrious and the most difficult auditors, but I did not feel them as I do now. I want to give these men the best I have. I want to be more vibrating, more vital for these unknown children of faraway provinces than I have ever cared to

be before royal boxes. Do you know, madame, that the greatest artists in France, or the most indifferent, tremble like novices before these soldiers, though they are always so responsive, so devoted, — "

Her voice broke.

" It 's true," Georges Marey said, his fine face lighting. " Nobody knows how great, how beautiful these men are! They have done everything, they are everything. They have saved France."

Outside there was a slight movement among the soldiers. The musicians stopped playing. Two poilus drew aside the curtain, and there stood Mlle. Prainee, in her pink silk jacket and mud-splashed skirt and boots, ready to say the invocation to the soldiers. It had been written by someone else, but the words came as if from her heart, telling the love, the reverence, the gratitude, the actors felt for the soldiers. Then followed three full hours of entertainment. No other audiences can equal the soldiers for breathless attention and appreciation. They were standing, — except for a few who had perched on a small loft, and upon cross beams. They were absolutely still, except for their laughter or clapping, and that they hushed quickly, that no word should be lost. There was a little shouting, but not much, not at all of the American sort; it was, so to speak, polite, diffident, almost wistful. Once they showed a quick, keen curiosity. It was when the sound of the enemy's guns could be heard.

They wanted to see how these artists were taking the dangers of the front.

They liked everything they heard: the beautiful singing of Madame May, the humorous recitations of Mlle. Debory. They laughed at the songs of M. Casa, who played his own accompaniments, facing the audience with wide-open, innocent eyes and puckered mouth, and the look of a serene, old fat mother of a family, his head far back, his chin nestling. Then of a sudden a sly sophisticated look would come into his eyes at some line, and he would relax into an oily fat smile. They liked M. Boyer, who strode on the platform in his gray-blue overcoat, smiling, zestful, abundant, sometimes laughing in the middle of his songs. He was as much a joy to them as M. Casa. Particularly they loved the three little comedies, two-part, three-part, and four-part, clever, brilliant, subtle, — and all the points "got over." There was so much highly-charged feeling, such an electric atmosphere, such direct contact of mind with mind that it was impossible that the points should not get over. At the close of the last play, in which Madame Dussand, Mlle. Prainee, Georges Marey, and M. Casa acted, somebody called out "one, two, three," and then the soldiers clapped in a series of "one-two-three-four-five; pause; one-two-three-four-five; pause; one-two-three-four-five; pause; one-two-three."

But there were two occasions when the audience and the actors were nearly one. The first time

was when Madame Dussand sang the songs of the road to them, and got them to join in the choruses. For generations those songs have been in the blood and bones of the French people: *Fanfan la Tulipe; Auprès de ma Blonde; Colette un Jour,* and *En Passant par la Lorraine.* At first the soldiers were shy, but presently they were unable to resist Madame Dussand's verve, her way of acting out the lines, hands on hips, head swinging, her spirited gestures that drew the audience in towards her. The other moment of reunion was at the end when Madame May sang the *Marseillaise.* She sang with penetrating sweetness and passion, and they joined in, taking off their helmets or caps. They did not sing, these soldiers, with the wild enthusiasm of the civilian in Paris, but quietly, almost solemnly. They know, better than the civilians, what their ideal of patriotism is costing them.

A wonderful three hours. But it was impossible to look at those men without a tightness in the throat. Not so much because they had just come back from horror and death; not because they would soon again face these foes of all peace, all happiness. But because from those faces all the youth was seared away. One soldier of perhaps eighteen, a boy with a color like a Canadian, for three hours had his face fixed like a mask of joyous expectation. His eyebrows were raised; the corners of his mouth were turned up, and the tip of his tongue was fixed against his teeth. Yet at

the end, when his face relaxed, there showed a substructure of strain. All of them had it, some more than others. There was a young sub-lieutenant whose face haunted me, a boy with a thin, strong, sensitive profile. His eyes were as old as a sybil's; his smile, however spontaneous, was weary. I thought of the pain it must give the woman who loved him most to see that worn, strained face, symbol of his soul. All the soldiers smiled, but the smile was on top. Their subconscious selves never forget the anguish of war, never go off duty.

The performance was over. The soldiers lingered in the barn or just outside to see us go away. We spoke to them, and they thanked us.

"You don't know how happy you have made us," they said, again and again; "come back soon."

M. Casa and M. Marey passed through the groups, bowing only, and got into their respective motors.

"Why didn't you talk to the soldiers?" I asked M. Casa.

"It's not wise. They're suspicious of any man not in uniform, even if he is unfit. Me, — for example. I look well; how do they know I am ill? Why am I not fighting for my country instead of singing? How do they know I am not an *embusqué?*"

The motors again and the officers' headquarters for dinner; seven courses, and a typewritten

menu, and soldier servants to wait on us, and a sense of the most delighted welcome. The poilus in their white coats beamed at us affectionately as they served us in the dim old room. The officers paid us compliments, and begged us not to go home till morning, — nor did we. Very interesting it was to watch the faces of the officers. I fancied I could tell the staff officers from those who were in actual fighting, for the faces of the latter had the same substructure of strain as those of the poilus.

What interested me most in the table talk, after I got used to the kind of stories that were going the round (though I pretended that my French was too poor to translate them), was the way the influence of that attack at Verdun came seeping forth, enveloping one slowly like some miasma, not to be driven away. From every quarter of the long table I could hear that talk of Verdun.

"The attack was to be at ten," said the colonel; "from eight to ten, — I have never known the time to drag as on that day. I kept doubting the truth of my honest little watch."

"Almost fifty thousand men engaged, four divisions."

". . . rifle-shooting; none, whatever. That battle was fought with the artillery and with bombs. A rifle was of no more use than a stirring spoon."

"Mud. It was quicksand mud. It buried the Germans. It buried our own men. A

glorious victory, — but what a strange weapon, that mud."

"Those magnificent Colonials. The big black leaping Senegalese going first, — they terrify the Germans. Then the Arabs, the Moroccans, Tunisians. I command a company of Arabs; brave men, good fighters, but one never knows when they are going to go mad with panic. They are like the Senegalese; they can't stand a bombardment; so we bring them down to the trenches just the night before the attack."

"Germans glad to be taken. We did n't even send them under guard to Verdun. They surrendered; we faced them towards the fortress, gave them a push, and said, 'Go there!' and they went, grinning, relieved."

"Ah, no, why should I disbelieve it when a man tells me that he will never come, alive, out of this battle! I try to comfort him, to laugh at him, but in four cases out of five, he is right. Something tells him, and he is right to listen, and to write his last letters home. Two such men who said that to me before the attack were smothered in the mud."

"No, madame (this to me), we had relatively few losses. We took twelve thousand prisoners, as you know; relatively few losses."

I don't like that word "relatively" when it applies to the death of men in battle. If the standard of measurement is a few rods of ground, ten kilometres by three to three and a half, — well,

then, as usual, one gives up the whole horrible business. As the hours passed, and the wine in the decanters grew lower, one or two officers became franker. I heard of a quarter lost from this company, a fifth from that; of the terrible slaughter of the first half hour; of stretcher-bearers killed at their work; of hundreds of men with frozen feet — and always, of the terrible sucking murder done by the mud. It drank men in, took them one by one, when there was no help near, and absorbed them, relentlessly, as they struggled. I began to feel as I had on other occasions that the mud was some devil, mocking men, making Nature herself side against them. The word "mud" has a sinister connotation for me now that I can never shake off.

The car, then, and a long drive home through the mud. Beside me, M. Casa began a humorous monologue. For mile after mile it went on, brilliant or ridiculous or shocking.

"But, monsieur," I said, "you are beginning to make me believe that it is not true that humorists are really serious persons."

"Listen, madame," he said, "I had a brother who was dearer to me than anyone in the world. That brother, he loved his wife and child, and he made a good living for them. He had no frivolous interests outside his home, his business and his friends. And now, he 's dead in the war; he 's nothing. So I, madame, I laugh; in the light of the war, there is nothing worth worrying about, worth shedding a tear over, nothing, nothing."

M. Casa hummed a little tune, and added,

"And now I 'll look out of the window, and see if there is any sign of my white-faced friend, the moon."

Our second breakfast next morning in the hotel was typical of the brilliant hours we spent together, before and after performances. As each actor came downstairs he went the rounds of the table, kissing the actresses on both cheeks, and shaking hands with the men. We sat at table something like two hours. The actors told incidents that had happened to them while playing before the soldiers on previous occasions. Mlle. Prainee said that once she acted with a gun carriage for the stage, and had to make her exit via the arms of the soldiers. Madame May told a story of playing in Alsace, at Thann, when an old, old man, much moved, said,

"Since you are so good as to come so far to play for us, I 'll show you a flag. It is the old flag from the townhall of Strasburg, which I myself raised in 1870, and which I 've kept hidden from the Germans ever since."

Madame Dussand told of having been at Pogny when a German prisoner was brought in to the commanding officer. The man wept, and got down on his knees, begging for mercy. Just then a French soldier was brought in, badly wounded.

"What is it you want, my child?" the officer asked him.

"Oh, my colonel, I am come to tell you good-

bye," he replied. Then, seeing the German on his knees, he looked at him ferociously, and added: "You, you 're crying, you coward. I am dead, but I 'm not crying!"

They began to talk then of the spirit of the soldier, M. Boyer saying that he liked to perform before the soldiers just after they had come from the front, because then they were excited and responsive.

"Ah," he added, "you talk of soldiers. You should have seen those with whom I fought, in the first year of the war. When I remember their faces during mass before we went into an attack! I sang then as I never do now. Those men! How marvellous they were! All dead now! They did not have much experience, but what a spirit! The ones fighting now have experience, — but if only we could have those first soldiers back, there would n't be a German alive in fifteen years!

"Ah, to hear those first soldiers singing the *Marseillaise!*" cried M. Marey. "It should always be a man who sings the *Marseillaise*."

From talk of the soldiers they would perhaps swing into a series of stories not at all fit for a young girl to hear, and then into a discussion of art.

"An actor without gesture," Madame Dussand would exclaim, "is nothing."

A knot of eager voices would begin to illustrate that point, analyzing the work of this and that

actor. Then M. Casa would solemnly arise, wind his napkin into a muff, and, gliding across an imaginary stage, would show us how Madame Dussand took her applause in the Comédie-Française. Or, speaking into a corner of the sideboard, he would show how another great actor made a speech of thanks on the part of his associates. After that he gave an impersonation of all of us as we had acted when he had been introduced to us, the group shouting out delightedly the name of each person caricatured. Then perhaps we would run over the group of officers we had met the day before, telling which ones we had liked best. Then there would be more stories, — possibly personal in character.

" My little boy is a child in a thousand," one of the men said. " Let me illustrate. Just a few weeks ago my wife and I had a misunderstanding. You perceive? Very well. I packed up my things and moved away. A few days later I had a note from my little boy, who is at school. ' Dear Papa,' he wrote. ' I am very sorry to hear of the difficulty you and mamma have had. It is very foolish, this. I have asked for a holiday for next Sunday, and I am coming home from school. I shall expect to see you and mamma both in the house, very happy to see me, and very happy to be reconciled.' He wrote the same letter to his mother. Naturally, we were together on Sunday, as he had directed."

Charming, brilliant, kindly, lovable people!

The time we spent at the table went so fast that I was always surprised when the officer in charge told us that the cars were at the door to take us to our soldiers. We gave them a performance every day, — and every time we gained fresh impressions; always the actors had the devoted attention of the poilus; always they looked tired to the bone of their souls; always we got the sinister atmosphere of the battle of Verdun.

Once we were at Ligny, rather a large town, to play before an audience that had been brought in from villages round about; the various companies did not know each other, and their own officers were not with them. That audience did not fuse well. There were difficulties even before the performance, for the actors were indignant at the caretaker of the hall in which they played — a cross old woman who complained because the soldiers were tracking in mud. We sat in her own sitting-room on her own chairs, and told her what we thought of her. One person even remarked — *sotto voce,* however — that she deserved the beard and moustache God had afflicted her with.

"Track mud over your floors," said Madame May, usually so gentle; "they could track over my heart if they wanted to."

Then, some of the soldiers did not get the points; the audience were mostly Colonials, and the negroes, at least, did not have the alertness of the poilus. Others seemed oversophisticated. The actors felt it; those who were lesser artists

exaggerated their effects; overdid it; the greater tried by their art to make the audience one.

Twice more we played in rooms, — one was a little schoolroom in a village big enough to have a mayor. He sat in the centre of the audience, a shrewd-faced provincial, not quite sure how far he ought to countenance Paris actresses. On the front seat sat General de Voillemont, a magnificent-looking man with a crêpe band on his sleeve. At his feet crouched a dog that has been with him everywhere in the field. The general told me he had had four sons fighting for France; one had been wounded in the Verdun attack, and it had been three days before the father had got word of how he was.

He enjoyed the performance as much as any of the poilus; and as M. Boyer sang his songs the general very audibly joined in; he seemed to know them all. The poilus kept their eyes on him as much as they did on the actresses. It was plain to see that they adored him. When the *Marseillaise* had been sung the general sprang to his feet.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I thank you on behalf of my soldiers and myself, for your wonderful programme, which has touched our hearts and helped our minds, weary after the recent battle. You have played, no doubt, before many famous audiences, but never yet to an audience like this, never before have you played to heroes, — to heroes such as my men are, to the noblest, the bravest soldiers France has ever known."

The look in the eyes of the general's dog was no more devoted than the look in the eyes of the men. Indeed, we all fell in love with him, but he singled out Mlle. Debory for a special honor, making her a corporal in the Fifty-fifth Regiment, giving her epaulets with the numbers on. That decoration did not seem quite sufficient to Mlle. Debory, who smiled, blushed, and leaned ever so definitely towards him. So then the general kissed her on both cheeks.

It was after another performance in a hall in Ligny when we were having tea with the officers that I saw the artists out of character; that is, most of them were as prim as children trying to be good in church. I was having a beautiful time with the Count of Paris, whose family is as old as all France, but who looks like an Irishman, and is said to be absolutely impervious under fire. But Madame May moaned in my ear, in English,

"Oh, how stiff they are, how difficult! I want to go home. Nobody is having a good time but you and Marcelle Prainee."

Mlle. Prainee was talking to a handsome officer, — unusually tall for a Frenchman. But then one is constantly surprised by the number of tall officers one sees in the war zone. I was arrested by her air. She is very self-confident, very secure in her sense of art. As I watched her I decided that the only difference between her and a society leader is that her surface is not quite so suave, and her manners to men rather less trusting,

rather more self-protecting. As she talked to her enthralled officer, she wore a courageous armor of indifference; she did not look at him very much, but when she did her glance was direct. She smiled, she was charming, but she gave the impression of being only slightly aware of him. Not a subtle, but a very practical person.

Madame Dussand was practising her stage laugh, not the loud, joyous yawp with which she had been wont to welcome the witticisms at breakfast. Her generous lovable spirit was under a cloud. Watching her, I felt glad when the little officer under whose care we were put us into our motors, and took us to the next place at which we were to play.

There our spirits rose. For one thing, most of the officers with whom we had dined on our first barnstorming evening had motored over to be with us. Then, we were to play again in a barn, and as we approached it, we saw the poilus hurrying towards it, — our own blessed men in blue. Best of all our dressing-room was to be a kitchen from which a passage led directly into the barn. And such a kitchen! It stood not many miles from Domremy in Lorraine, where Joan of Arc was born, and I understand the two places are rather alike. The room itself is a little, dark, raftered place, containing an old dresser, and a bench, a chair or two, and, most important of all, a high chimney. This chimney, and the old woman who sat by it, were worth all the miles of sea and land

I had crossed. The chimney was about sixteen feet broad by seven deep; and thirty or forty feet high. As I peered up, through its very black, smoke-incrusted walls, the distance seemed illimitable, the faint bit of sky at the top, a whole world away. Hooks stood out from the sooty walls for smoking hams, and a long crane hung over the fire beneath. That chimney was made four hundred years ago, when wood was plentiful and fires were generous, and when a whole ox could be roasted at once, if need be. It was built before Joan of Arc was born. Well, doubtless, it was obvious enough to dream over the thousands of men that had died for France while that black old hearth and chimney had stood there; obvious, but very real, because in the stable next door were hundreds of men in blue who were also going to die for France.

The old woman was a little bent creature with a face like a rosy November apple, blue eyes, and a young girl's smile. She wore a white cap with strings. As the actresses came in she swept a heap of clothes from off the long bench before the fire, and urged us to sit down. And as we sat there, scraping the mud off our boots, she said,

"You come to sing for the soldiers?"

"Yes, madame."

"I," said the old woman, "I wash for the soldiers," and she patted the heap of clothes that she held in her arms.

A very simple little happening, that, but there

was something about it that made our eyes grow dim. She was seventy years old, and she had eight sons fighting for France. She had been born in that house, had brought up her sons there, and now, in spite of the danger of shells, she would not move away.

"I cannot wash for my eight boys," she said, "but there are other soldiers here. I wash for them. When things happen here that make them laugh, I laugh too, and when they dream, as you will make them dream to-night, mesdames, then I smile too."

Madame May, wiping her eyes, whispered to me,

"She 's a good deal of a contrast to that caretaker at Ligny, — or to the last landlady I met in the war zone who accused us of coming to get what men were left to lead to destruction. She seemed to prefer Germans to us."

Then the stables: the same impression of blue shadow; the silhouettes of the crowded, standing soldiers; the eager welcoming faces, with their substructure of strain. In front of the soldiers was a row of chairs on which sat officers, and the mayor of the village, an old white-haired man of ninety-two, with a patriarchal beard and a keen eye. He sat with his arms folded, for the sake of politeness, and he had the air of a father who has led his deserving children out to give them a treat. These officers, among them our old followers, were in gay spirits. When Madame May

sang *Tipperary* they all joined in the chorus, pronouncing the title-word "Tipperawry." With them was an officer whose mother was an American.

Talking to him between acts, and looking at the faces of the soldiers, I again felt the sinister atmosphere of Verdun.

"One of your officers," I said, "told me that the soldiers are happy. I should n't call them that by their faces, — not even here, where they are '*en repos*.'"

"Here," he replied, "they are not fighting; they are away from home, and wondering if they are going to get *permissions* to go, or thinking of the *permissions* they have lost, or have yet to come. Perhaps some of them here had bad news from home, or none at all. It 's a whole world here, — an abnormal world. No, they 're not happy. They 're brave, — and maybe cynical."

"Oh, not that!"

"Then perhaps I am. Three villages taken in the last attack at Verdun; some earthworks; one hundred and fifty guns accounted for; twelve thousand prisoners, and as many more killed. But, — was it worth while? I have a horror of that attack. So many young boys were in it who were in the trenches for the first time. The men suffered so dreadfully. No one will ever know how much! If you had seen them coming back, as I did, you would have thought that they had been defeated instead of victorious. Luckily our men

have been through so much that a lot of them don't feel any more."

He looked as if he felt keenly enough, and presently he began to talk about himself.

"At the beginning of the war I found the diary of a dead German. He wrote with the greatest of enthusiasm; he said that he was assisting in the greatest tragedy of the world. We all felt that way at first. But now there 's no more enthusiasm. Men feel that they must keep up the honor of the regiment, and must die for France if it 's necessary. But the glory is gone. What we do, we do from habit. Maybe we 'll idealize it all afterwards, but we don't now.

"And the monotony! It 's not good for the men. They 're better fed than they were, and they are well disciplined, in that they fight when they are bidden. But they don't have work to do in the sense of their old trades; they lack the influence of their wives and children. Some men will come out of this better, and some worse, but no one will remain the same. I 'll come out worse. I 'm twenty-seven, and I 've got no more impulses, no ideas, no wants. That 's the abnormal part of it; I 've no wants. I 'll be so old when the war is over that I won't be able to develop any. Before the war I used to write verses; read good things; study. Now I 've got so much time on my hands that I could become very learned. But I don't read. I play cards, and get more callous every day I live!"

M. Boyer had come on the stage, and the poilus were responding to his familiar smile. He recited a piece about what it would be like the day the French army marched under the Arc de Triomphe, with the civilians whom they had saved crowding about them. He spoke of the applause given to the aviators and marines, the grenadiers, dragoons, and artillerymen. Then the infantrymen passed. There was a dead silence. They looked about to see why they were not applauded. The civilians were on their knees.

There were tears in the eyes of many of the soldiers; they moved a little, and coughed.

"There!" I said, triumphantly, to the Franco-American; "You see! They're not cynical! They know that what they're doing is worth while and that the civilians understand, are grateful."

He might have replied, but at that moment Madame May came on the stage, leading a young poilu. There was a pleasant stir among the audience. One of their own comrades was going to help the artists. The soldier was an opera singer from the provinces. He had a beautiful tenor voice, and he and Madame May sang several selections from *Manon,* her favorite rôle. At first the poilu was shy of approaching her in the love parts, but presently he forgot everything but the music. It was a joy to see the pride on the faces of the soldiers. When Madame May was made a corporal of the Fifty-fifth Regiment, and the tenor pinned the epaulets upon her coat, they trans-

ferred their pride to her, accepting her as their comrade. At the close of the programme the tenor sang the *Marseillaise*. He stood leaning a trifle backward, his head high, his right arm held up; at "*Marchons*" he stepped forward a pace. I felt as if he were holding a flag. The soldiers sang the second verse. I shall never again hear the *Marseillaise* sung as it was that night.

Dinner then; a delicious meal, with soldier servants waiting on us, the young tenor asked in to have wine with us. Stories, recitations by Mlle. Debory of M. Boyer's work; toasts; talk; then, in the early hours of the morning the cars. Goodbye to the old kitchen, to the little old woman long at rest, to the men in blue, sleeping in the barn. Asleep, but still we were carrying them with us. They had given the actors so much more than the actors had given them. We are told that to view tragedy is purifying to the soul. Perhaps never till now could comedy be called purifying. But it was, — not because of the comedy, but because of those brave common heroes of France for whom it was made. It has been said that it is good for the morale of the soldiers to see these performances of the army theatre; it is equally good for the actors who return to Paris serene, comforted, sure of the future of France.

Mud still as we got into our cars, but the rain gone and a wonderful keen moon in a light blue sky. As we slipped over the white road, the witchery of the moon was such that I could not believe

we were passing through stretches of country that had known death and desolation. The untilled fields lay dark and restful. The little cottages seemed to drowse without danger under the overhanging trees. I lost sight of the shelled houses and barbed-wire entanglements and deserted trenches. I saw only the homes and fields of a peaceful people, and at every crossroads a tall stone wayside cross. On each one the hanging Christ stood out sharply in the moonlight, waiting for the day of peace and forgiveness.

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